United Nations A/71/1011–S/2017/687

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.:
8 August 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 61
Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Letter dated 7 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a statement by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea dated 7 August 2017 with regard to the adoption by the Security Council of the most intensive "sanctions resolution" against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ja** Song Nam
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

17-13602 (E) 100817

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 7 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 7 August 2017 over the fact that the U.S. and other hostile forces, terrified at the growth of the DPRK's state nuclear force in quality and quantity, are steeped in the most intensive sanctions, pressure and provocation against the DPRK

On August 6, the U.S. framed up "sanctions resolution" 2371 at the United Nations Security Council which is geared to completely block the DPRK's economic development and improvement of the people's livelihood, branding its test-launch of ICBM as "a threat to international peace and security".

This UN "sanctions resolution", to all intents and purposes, is an outcome of diabolical attempts of the U.S. to isolate and stifle the DPRK, which constitutes a flagrant infringement upon its sovereignty and an open challenge to it.

The DPRK's access to the strongest nuclear force is a fair and legitimate measure for self-defense to protect the country's sovereignty and the nation's right to existence from the high-handed and arbitrary acts of the U.S. which has made it its business to pursue the policy of extreme hostility and pose nuclear threat to the DPRK well over half a century.

The successive test-launch of ICBM by the DPRK was a stern warning to the U.S. which, being entrenched far across the Pacific, wages reckless and perilous military provocation and despicable campaign of sanctions on the DPRK.

However, the U.S. goes more frenzied and desperate instead of accepting the DPRK's existence and learning to coexist with the latter. It is trying to drive the situation of the Korean peninsula to the brink of nuclear war, running amuck to conduct missile drill against the DPRK and deploying massive strategic equipment to the peninsula.

It was against this backdrop that the U.S. manipulated UNSC to rig up the "sanctions resolution" more heinous than ever, placing a total ban even on normal trade activities and economic exchange, thereby disclosing before the whole world its evil intention to obliterate the ideology and system of the DPRK and exterminate its people.

On the other hand, the U.S. causes such a racket with no time to wipe their mouth, making impudent remarks that it is considering the so-called military option targeting the DPRK.

There are countries to which the ridiculous threats of the U.S. are working and there are countries which lie prostrate at the bluff of the U.S.

The U.S. claiming to be the "only superpower of the world" and the DPRK's neighbors hardly any smaller in size than the U.S. are all so frightened at merely two ICMB test-launches by the DPRK that they are making much a scene baying at each other. Watching them go frantic only redoubles the DPRK's pride in the country's great might and reaffirms its faith that the path it had chosen is the only way to survive and prosper.

The DPRK has already gained everything it needed while having everything wanted in its hands through an arduous struggle under the harshest sanctions regime created by numerous UN "sanctions resolutions" adopted at the instigation of the

U.S. during the last several decades. It is only a forlorn hope to consider any chance that the DPRK would be shaken an inch or change its stance by the sanctions of this new kind imposed upon by the hostile forces.

As the U.S. launched full-scale provocation against the DPRK across all fields of politics, economy and military, nothing can alter the will and resolve of the army and people of the DPRK to respond by taking resolute retaliatory measures.

The DPRK Government solemnly states as follows to cope with the grave situation created by the frantic acts of the U.S. and other hostile forces;

First, the DPRK condemns in the strongest terms and totally rejects the anti-DPRK "sanctions resolution" of the UNSC rigged up by the U.S. and other hostile forces as a wanton infringement upon the sovereignty of the country.

The DPRK is taking measures to strengthen the self-defensive nuclear deterrence in order to counter the policy of extreme hostility and nuclear threat against it from the U.S., the biggest nuclear weapons state of the world. Terming these measures "a threat to international peace and security" is a gangster like logic indicating that the rest of the world should either become U.S. colonies serving its interests or fall victim to its aggression.

The countries, that openly pursue their ambition to maintain permanent nuclear hegemony by conducting most of the nuclear tests in the world and launching ICBM whenever they please, are adopting illegal and unlawful "sanctions resolutions" to incriminate the DPRK's bolstering of self-defensive nuclear force and enforcing those sanctions over its alleged "violation" of them. This constitutes the height of outrageous double standard.

As long as the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat continue, the DPRK, no matter who may say what, will never place its self-defensive nuclear deterrence on the negotiation table or flinch an inch from the road chosen by itself, the road of bolstering up the state nuclear force.

Second, now that the U.S. did forge the "sanctions resolution" by manipulating the UNSC to obliterate the DPRK's sovereignty and rights to existence and development, the DPRK will move into its resolute action of justice as it had already clarified.

The U.S. is acting absurd by resorting to the anachronistic sanctions and pressure campaign against the DPRK, instead of appreciating the strategic status of the DPRK and paying proper attention to its repeated warnings. The unwise conduct of the U.S. will only speed up its own extinction.

As the gangsters of the U.S. remain unabated in their mean and heinous provocation, the DPRK will further increase the strength of justice to thoroughly eradicate the cause of war and aggression and never back away from this fight to a finish.

Third, the DPRK will make the U.S. pay dearly for all the heinous crime it commits against the state and people of this country.

The U.S. once waged a tragic war that plunged this land into a sea of blood and fire, and has been leaving no stone unturned to obliterate the DPRK's ideology and system century after century. The U.S. is sadly mistaken if it considers its mainland a safe haven for being on the other side of the ocean.

Those countries which were offered "thanks" from the U.S. as a reward for taking part in the conspiracy to invent the heinous "sanctions resolution" against the DPRK through their backdoor arrangement this time, too, would never be able to

evade the responsibility for increasing the tensions on the Korean peninsula and jeopardizing peace and security of the region.

If the U.S. fails to act with discretion, persisting in its reckless attempts to stifle the DPRK, we will not waver or hesitate to use any form of ultimate means.

The DPRK will hold fast to the line of simultaneously developing the two fronts, the lasting banner of defending peace, and continue to march straight forward to the end of the road chosen by itself without the slightest deviation.

United Nations S/2017/688

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 August 2017
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 8 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith information from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the launch of a medium-range ballistic missile by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 28 July 2017 (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

17-13697 (E) 100817 110817

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 8 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Information from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence dated 28 July 2017

The ballistic missile launched on 28 July 2017 at approximately 1740 hours (Moscow time) from the Tongchang-ri missile launch site in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was tracked by the Russian missile attack warning system. The launch was carried out in a direction away from the borders and did not pose a threat to the Russian Federation. The missile reached an altitude of 681 kilometres and flew 732 kilometres before falling into the central part of the Sea of Japan. The parametric flight data of the ballistic target monitored by the Russian missile attack warning system correspond to the characteristics of a medium-range ballistic missile.

United Nations S/2017/689

Security Council

Distr.: General
11 August 2017
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 8 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 5-8 August 2017 (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

17-13892 (E) 150817 160817

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 8 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (5 August 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported five incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: two in Aleppo, two in Ladhiqiyah and one in Damascus.

The Turkish representative office has reported two violations: one in Damascus governorate and one in Ladhiqiyah governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,131.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Idlib and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 228.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (6 August 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported seven incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: three in Aleppo, three in Damascus and one in Ladhiqiyah.

The Turkish representative office has reported six violations: four in Damascus governorate and two in Hama governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations.

Russian field medics have provided medical assistance to 67 people.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, four ceasefire agreements have been signed with Humayrah, Musa al-Hulah, Tumin and Abu Dardah in Hama governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,135.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Idlib and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 228.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (7 August 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 18 incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: 14 in Aleppo, 3 in Ladhiqiyah and 1 in Damascus.

The Turkish representative office has reported three violations in Damascus governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations.

Russian field medics have provided medical assistance to 86 people.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,135.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Idlib and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 228.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (8 August 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported four incidents of gunfire in Laqhiqiyah governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported three violations: two in Damascus governorate and one in Homs governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has facilitated the passage of two United Nations humanitarian convoys to Tayyibah and Nawa in Dar'a governorate.

One United Nations humanitarian operation was carried out: the Russian airline Abakan Air parachuted a total of 21 tons of humanitarian cargo (food products) near to the city of Dayr-al-Zawr.

Russian field medics have provided medical assistance to 37 people.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,135.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Idlib and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 228.

United Nations A/71/1022–S/2017/690

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
11 August 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 32
Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 8 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement dated 7 August 2017 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the ninth anniversary of the war of August 2008 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 32, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kaha **Imnadze**
Permanent Representative

17-13914 (E) 150817

Please recycle

Annex to the identical letters dated 8 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the 9th anniversary of the August 2008 War

7.08.2017 Tbilisi — 7 August 2017 marks the 9th anniversary of Russia's large-scale military invasion in Georgia and illegal occupation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions.

After nine years of the August 2008 war, Russia still violates the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and continues its policy of occupation and factual annexation with regard to inseparable regions of the sovereign state in complete disregard for fundamental principles of international law. This envisages the illegal integration of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia into Russia's military, political, economic and social system; military build-up in the occupied regions, as well as fortification of the occupation line by razor and barbed wire fences and different artificial barriers. At the same time, illegal detentions and kidnappings of people along the occupation line, restriction of freedom of movement and access by residents of the adjacent territories to their farmlands and houses regularly take place. This situation has been even more aggravated by closure of four so-called crossing points in Abkhazia region. Ethnic discrimination towards Georgians living in the occupied territories and violation of their fundamental rights continue. While hundreds of thousands of persons are expelled from their homes, the Russian occupation regime treats the remaining Georgian population in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions as foreigners in their houses. Following the restriction of Georgian language in Gali district schools, from the next academic year education in native language will be prohibited in Georgian schools of Tskhinvali region as well. Against this background, the Russian occupation regime tries to further isolate the people living in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and intentionally hinders their humanitarian contacts with the rest of Georgia and the world.

Despite Russia's provocative actions, the Government of Georgia continues its unwavering peace policy and strives for peaceful conflict resolution through diplomatic means, negotiations and dialogue. In contrast to the Russian Federation, Georgia stays in firm compliance with the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and through constructive engagement tries to achieve the tangible result in the Geneva International Discussions. Furthermore, against the backdrop of permanent use of force by the Russian Federation in the occupied territories, Georgia has many times confirmed its legally binding commitment on non-use of force, *inter alia*, on executive and legislative levels. Besides, the Government of Georgia resists barbwire fences and artificial barriers erected along the occupation line with intensified policy of building confidence and ties between the war-torn communities.

As a result of this rational and peaceful policy, despite above difficult challenges, the Government of Georgia managed to turn the democratic and economic development of the country into irreversible process, achieved peace and stability in its controlled territory and made progress in the European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

The Georgian side highly appreciates firm support of partner countries and international organizations towards sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, and their relevant decisions, which significantly contribute to the conflict resolution

according to the norms and principles of international law. After nine years of ongoing occupation, the Georgian side once again calls upon the international community to make consolidated efforts to address the consequences of the August 2008 war and resolve the Russia-Georgia conflict peacefully.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses its deepest sympathy to the families and relatives of the soldiers and civil population who fell victim to the August 2008 war.

United Nations S/2017/691

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 August 2017

Original: English

Note by the President of the Security Council

At its 8021st meeting, held on 9 August 2017, the Security Council considered its draft report to the General Assembly covering the period from 1 August 2015 to 31 December 2016. The Council adopted the draft report without a vote.

17-13679 (E) 090817

Please recycle

United Nations S/2017/692

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 August 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 7 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As you may be aware, on 29 August 2017, during its presidency of the Security Council, Egypt is organizing an open debate of the Security Council on the theme "United Nations peacekeeping operations: their potential contribution to the overarching goal of sustaining peace".

The aim of the open debate is to highlight the potential contribution of peacekeeping mandates to the overarching goal of sustaining peace and to explore practical ways for the Security Council to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions and their role in conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as their contribution to an orderly transition to reconstruction and development in an inclusive manner, which are fundamental pillars for sustaining peace. Please find attached the concept note for the debate (see annex), which I kindly request to be circulated to the Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Amr **Aboulatta**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations

17-13695 (E) 140817

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 7 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept paper

Security Council open debate

United Nations peacekeeping operations: their potential contribution to the overarching goal of sustaining peace

1. Context

The complex and emerging challenges to international peace and security necessitate a more robust, coherent and comprehensive United Nations approach throughout the various stages of conflicts. There is an emerging wisdom that the United Nations must deploy the tools that are most conducive to preventing and addressing the root causes of the violent conflicts for which they are deployed, with a view to identifying durable solutions. In this context, the three major United Nations reviews of 2015 concluded that it is imperative for the Organization to shift from a sequence to a continuum of responses to the changing and complex security challenges of today in order to contribute to realizing the ultimate goal of sustaining peace.

In its resolution 2282 (2016), the Security Council defined sustaining peace as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, especially when emerging from conflict. It also noted that sustaining peace included "activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development". This broad definition indicated that the range of tools and activities available to the United Nations needed to be fully explored, deployed throughout the continuum of response and tailored to the specific context they were intended to address. These tools cover a range of engagements, from preventive diplomacy to peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding.

In this connection, in resolution 2086 (2013), the Security Council welcomed "the contribution of peacekeeping operations to a comprehensive strategy for durable peace and security" and emphasized "that United Nations peacekeeping activities should be conducted in a manner so as to facilitate post-conflict peacebuilding, prevention of relapse of armed conflict and progress towards sustainable peace and development". It further stressed "the importance of grasping the challenges of peacebuilding from the inception of a peacekeeping mission" "so as to ensure coherence between, and integration of, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development to achieve an effective response to post-conflict situations from the outset".

In April 2017, the Council was invited to focus on the aspect of peacekeeping reform related to the political foundations necessary for the success of peacekeeping missions and to analyse whether the mandated tasks and overall concept of the mission are consistent with political realities on the ground. It is necessary, however, that the Council further develop its consideration of the question of the effectiveness of peacekeeping mandates by examining whether and how they contribute to sustaining peace, as part of a continuum of response.

Therefore, and in addition to their essential military and police-related security and protection objectives, peacekeeping mandates should be: (a) adaptable to emerging political and operational challenges throughout the various stages of post-conflict engagement; (b) designed around a range of integrated political, programmatic and operational tasks that prioritize support for building inclusive and effective national institutions and strengthening national capacities; (c) measured against clearly defined political and governance benchmarks; (d) guided by the broader regional and cross-border context and dynamics; and (e) envisaged with a clear exit strategy that seeks to empower national, regional, bilateral and United Nations actors to help lay the foundations for the long-term objective of sustaining peace.

These five parameters for the design, implementation and review of peacekeeping mandates would not only enhance the operational effectiveness of the missions, but would likely increase their efficiency in financial terms.

2. Objective

The open debate seeks to highlight the potential contribution of peacekeeping mandates to the overarching goal of sustaining peace, drawing upon, to the extent possible, the varying contexts in which existing or drawing-down peacekeeping missions operate. It would explore practical ways for the Security Council to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions and their role in conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as their contribution to an orderly transition to reconstruction and development in an inclusive manner, which are fundamental pillars for sustaining peace.

3. Key issues for consideration and elaboration

Member States are encouraged to address the following questions, drawing on their respective understanding and perspectives of situations where peacekeeping mandates are either in place or in their exit phase. They are also invited to reflect upon the potential for enhancing the Peacebuilding Commission's advisory function to the Security Council, as appropriate, in the following areas.

a. Different mandates in different contexts (such as the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic)

- What is the analytical framework required in order for the Council to consider changes to United Nations peacekeeping mandates so that they are better and continuously adapted to the ever-changing realities on the ground and so that they contribute to the broader political and development foundations necessary for sustaining peace?
- How best can peacekeeping mandates complement existing national, regional and international efforts aimed at advancing and encouraging dialogue and national reconciliation?
- How can peacekeeping mandates be devised to ensure regular and structured engagement with local communities, including women and youth, religious leaders and local authorities in order to support the establishment of social cohesion in conflict-affected areas?

b. National ownership and managing the transition towards exit (such as the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti)

- How should the Security Council ensure that, as missions draw down, peacekeeping mandates are aligned with and supportive of national priorities?
- In which way should the structure and integrated components of peacekeeping missions be adapted over time and during the drawdown phase in order to complement efforts aimed at strengthening national capacities and institutions for sustaining peace?

4. Briefers

The Secretary-General (or Deputy Secretary-General) (to be confirmed); Youssef Mahmoud, Senior Advisor, International Peace Institute, former member of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations; Gert Rosenthal, former Chair of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture.

5. Outcome/follow-up

No outcome is envisaged at the debate. However, the debate is intended to launch follow-up regional consultations in Africa, with a view to further generating perspectives from the African Union and key actors that host or contribute to peacekeeping operations on the continent.

United Nations S/2017/693

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 August 2017
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 9 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter from the Russian Minister of Defence, Mr. Sergei Shoigu, addressed to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

17-13831 (E) 140817 150817

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 9 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Letter dated 28 July 2017 from the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation addressed to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria

The Russian Ministry of Defence has completed work on the establishment of de-escalation areas in south-eastern Syria (Dar'a, Qunaytirah and Suwayda') and also in Eastern Ghuta. Russian military police units are present in the de-escalation areas, ensuring security and unhindered humanitarian access.

However, the humanitarian situation in the de-escalation areas remains complicated. The residents of these areas, living in peace once again, are in acute need of food, water, clothing, and medicines and medical equipment.

The situation could be improved if humanitarian activity were intensified in the areas of Syria where hostilities have ceased, in particular the southern de-escalation area and the Eastern Ghuta de-escalation area.

We believe that all the necessary conditions are now in place for humanitarian activity to be stepped up in the aforementioned areas.

Russian military police units will ensure the safe passage of humanitarian convoys in coordination with the Syrian authorities.

(*Signed*) S. **Shoigu**
Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation

United Nations S/2017/694

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 August 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 8 August 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey herewith a report of the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the status of the implementation of the plan for the destruction of Libya's remaining category 2 chemical weapons outside the territory of Libya (see annex). The report, dated 24 July 2017, covers the period from 23 June to 22 July 2017.

The report was prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-52/DEC.1 of 20 July 2016 and Security Council resolution 2298 (2016) of 22 July 2016, for transmission to the Security Council.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

17-13716 (E) 110817

Please recycle

Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Status of the implementation of the plan for the destruction of Libya's remaining category 2 chemical weapons outside the territory of Libya", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of OPCW Executive Council Decision EC-M-52/DEC.1, dated 20 July 2016, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2298 (2016), dated 22 July 2016, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 23 June to 22 July 2017 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-52/DEC.2, dated 27 July 2016, and EC-M-53/DEC.1, dated 26 August 2016.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

Report of the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Status of the implementation of the plan for the destruction of Libya's remaining category 2 chemical weapons outside the territory of Libya

1. At its Fifty-Second Meeting, the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") adopted a decision on the "Destruction of Libya's Remaining Chemical Weapons" (EC-M-52/DEC.1, dated 20 July 2016) and requested the Director-General to assist Libya in developing a modified plan of destruction of Libya's Category 2 chemical weapons. On 22 July 2016, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2298 (2016), welcoming and endorsing the decision by the Council and requesting the Director-General, through the Secretary-General, to report to the Security Council on a regular basis until the destruction is complete and verified.

2. At the conclusion of its Fifty-Second Meeting, the Council adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Libya's Remaining Category 2 Chemical Weapons" (EC-M-52/DEC.2, dated 27 July 2016). In operative paragraph 17 of that decision, the Council requested the Director-General to report to the Council on a monthly basis on the implementation of the decision. This eleventh monthly report covers the period from 23 June to 22 July 2017.

Progress in the elimination of Libyan chemical weapons by the State Party hosting destruction activities

3. Gesellschaft zur Entsorgung von chemischen Kampfstoffen und Rüstungsaltlasten mbH (GEKA mbH), the designated destruction facility at Munster, Germany, completed the destruction of the 2-chloroethanol and tributylamine on 17 December 2016 and 20 January 2017, respectively.

4. As previously reported (EC-85/DG.1, dated 23 March 2017), the destruction of phosphorous trichloride was suspended as a necessary precaution in order to prevent the refractory coating from severe damage. Destruction totals for phosphorous trichloride remain at 3.2 metric tonnes (MT), or 2.8%.

5. Using the incinerator in Incinerator Plant 1 ("Munster 1"), GEKA mbH began the destruction of thionyl chloride on 24 March 2017. GEKA mbH and the Host State have notified the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") that the required permits to alter the destruction technology from incineration to neutralisation were received and neutralisation of thionyl chloride began on 5 July 2017. As at 17 July 2017, 17.74 MT, or 17.6%, of the thionyl chloride had been destroyed.

6. Secretariat teams continue to inspect GEKA mbH every two months, with the last such inspection having been conducted from 26 to 28 June 2017. No issues were encountered with the destruction process.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to Libya

7. The Secretariat inspected the destruction operations at GEKA mbH and conducted a final engineering review of the neutralisation system during the aforementioned inspection. The Secretariat inspection team confirmed that all

verification measures were in place for the forthcoming neutralisation process and verified the ongoing destruction through on-site confirmation and review of video recordings.

8. The next inspection at GEKA mbH is scheduled to take place from 11 to 14 September 2017. The Secretariat will continue to assess the verification procedures for the neutralisation process and confirm the destruction since the last inspection.

9. GEKA mbH is confident that the destruction of the Libyan Category 2 chemical weapons in Germany will be completed by the deadline established in operative paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-M-52/DEC.2.

10. As previously reported, the Secretariat was informed that during decanting operations at the Ruwagha storage facility, one container experienced an exothermic reaction, causing the material inside to polymerise. Owing to the levels of the Category 2 chemicals remaining in the container (approximately 5%), the viscous nature of the remnants, and the limited ability to recover any useable material, the Secretariat is in a position to affirm that the material no longer presents a proliferation threat.

11. In line with decision EC-M-51/DEC.1 (dated 24 February 2016), the Secretariat has concluded an agreement with the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) to contract a Libyan firm to complete the destruction of the one remaining tank at the Ruwagha facility. Libya informed the Council at its Eighty-Fifth Session that the pump had been received to assist in the reloading of a partial amount, to allow for hydrolysis of the material. Preparation and destruction operations for the contents of the remaining tank in Ruwagha are scheduled to begin in the week of 25 July 2017.

12. Destruction operations will be limited to the remaining tank and will not affect the Secretariat's ability to obtain samples from the Ruwagha Tank Farm.

13. The Secretariat, in accordance with the report of the Council at its Eighty-Third Session (paragraph 6.12 of EC-83/5, dated 11 November 2016), continues to consult with the United Nations Office of Safety and Security (UNDSS) as to the possibility of Secretariat personnel travelling to Ruwagha to obtain soil samples. The UNDSS is currently advising against such travel. The Secretariat will continue to monitor the situation.

Overall costs and status of the trust fund

14. On 1 August 2016, the Secretariat issued a Note calling for voluntary contributions to the trust fund for support to Libya (S/1400/2016, dated 1 August 2016). As at the cut-off date of this report, the trust fund had received over EUR 1.2 million, with contributions having been received from Canada, Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand, and the United States of America. An additional EUR 133,638 was received from Canada in the form of a transfer of funds from a previous trust fund dedicated to Libya. Furthermore, the Secretariat received a contribution of EUR 20,000 from Spain on 30 June 2017. As at the cut-off date of this report, expenses in the amount of EUR 739,160 had been charged to the trust fund for activities related to the destruction of Libya's Category 2 chemical weapons.

15. The trust fund continues to be used to fund activities related to Libya's Category 2 chemical weapons. The OPCW has concluded an agreement with UNOPS, utilising funding from Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand and Spain for the destruction of the remaining tank at Ruwagha.

16. The Secretariat has received a programme of work and budget for the clean-up operations of the Ruwagha Tank Farm. The programme of work and budget has been presented to potential donors for their consideration. The Secretariat acknowledges the request by the Council at its Eighty-Third Session to obtain soil samples from the area surrounding decanted Category 2 chemical tanks (paragraph 6.12 of EC-83/5). No action will be taken until sufficient soil samples can be obtained.

17. The Director-General would once again like to express his appreciation to those States Parties that have already made or have committed to making voluntary contributions to the trust fund.

United Nations S/2017/695*

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 August 2017

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2343 (2017), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) until 28 February 2018 and requested that I report every six months on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and on progress made in the implementation of the resolution and the mandate of UNIOGBIS. The report provides an update on key political, security, human rights, socioeconomic and humanitarian developments in Guinea-Bissau since my report of 7 February 2017 (S/2017/111).

II. Major developments in Guinea-Bissau

A. Political situation

2. Since my last report, the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau has persisted, with no progress made towards implementation of the Conakry Agreement signed on 14 October 2016. The impasse at the National Assembly and the consequent non-approval of the Government's programme and State budget have further polarized positions in the country. Despite various initiatives aimed at genuine dialogue to resolve the institutional crisis, there has been no sign of a breakthrough.

3. On 6 February, the Government of Prime Minister Umaro Sissoco Embaló submitted its programme to the National Assembly. On 22 February, the 15-member Permanent Commission of the Assembly rejected the scheduling of an ordinary session to consider the programme on the grounds that the Government had not been formed in compliance with the Conakry Agreement, and that the programme was not submitted within the 30-day deadline set out in the Agreement. Only the nine members of the Commission from the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) participated in the vote, while the remaining six members, from the Party for Social Renewal (PRS), abstained.

4. On 23 February, PRS, which is the second largest party in Parliament after PAIGC, submitted a petition to the Speaker of the National Assembly, Cipriano Cassamá, requesting the nullification of the Permanent Commission's decision and the convening of a plenary meeting of the National Assembly to consider the

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Government's programme. On 3 March, the Speaker issued a decision rejecting the request, arguing that the party lacked the legal standing to appeal the decisions of the Commission. On 12 April, the PRS parliamentary group announced its decision to participate only in plenary sessions of the National Assembly.

5. Meanwhile, in the light of the lack of progress in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement, the Mediator of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for Guinea-Bissau, President Alpha Condé of Guinea, sent his Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency, Naby Youssouf Kiridi Bangoura, to Bissau, on 8 and 9 March. Mr. Bangoura held consultations with the political leaders of the country and with members of the international community to discuss the Mediator's proposal for a reconciliation meeting in Conakry between the PAIGC leadership and the group of 15 parliamentarians who had been expelled from the party in January 2016. The proposed meeting did not materialize, however, owing to lack of consensus within the group of 15 parliamentarians.

6. From 10 March to 18 May, the President of Guinea-Bissau, José Mário Vaz, carried out a nationwide tour to seek the views of local stakeholders on national affairs. Throughout the tour, the President focused on three priorities: peace and stability; appropriate management of public funds; and the implementation of his "*Mon na Lama*" ("All hands on deck") agriculture project towards the achievement of food self-sufficiency. The tour ended in Bissau, where both the President and the Minister of the Interior stated that the Government of Prime Minister Sissoco Embaló would "not be dismissed because of international pressure".

7. A series of demonstrations marked the reporting period. On 9 March, a movement called "The Citizen" organized a protest in Bissau, demanding the resumption of the National Assembly's activities and expressing support for the President and the Government. On 11 March, the "Movement of Conscientious and Nonconformist Citizens" held a counter-demonstration in Bissau, calling for the resignation of the President. Although PAIGC did not express public support for the protest, many party militants reportedly participated in it. On 8 April, the Movement organized a vigil, which was attended by approximately two dozen people, urging the President to find a solution to the political crisis or call for early general elections. Police used tear gas against the demonstrators, arrested seven people and subsequently released them. On 22 April, the Movement and other civil society organizations held another demonstration, gathering approximately 1,000 people, which was conducted peacefully. However, during a demonstration organized by the same movement on 27 May, which involved about 800 participants, law enforcement personnel and demonstrators clashed, causing injuries to 18 demonstrators and police officers, according to hospital sources.

8. In the light of these developments, the group of international partners based in Guinea-Bissau, composed of representatives of the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations, issued a press release on 26 May, noting with concern the rise of tensions in the country, fuelled by inflammatory rhetoric, strikes and threats of violent street demonstrations. The group recalled previous declarations by ECOWAS, the United Nations Security Council and the European Union, urging political actors to show restraint.

9. On 2 April, the Executive Secretary of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, Maria do Carmo Silveira, arrived in Bissau for a four-day visit to consult with national and international stakeholders on the crisis. After her meeting with President Vaz on 5 April, the Executive Secretary stated that she had received assurances from the President that he would do everything possible to set up a platform for dialogue among the citizens of Guinea-Bissau.

10. On 23 April, following consultations in Conakry with the ECOWAS Mediator, President Alpha Condé, an ECOWAS ministerial mission arrived in Bissau, with the support of UNIOGBIS. The mission was led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and included the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sierra Leone, the Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency of Guinea, the Chief of Staff of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal and the President of the ECOWAS Commission.

11. The ministerial mission consulted with international partners based in Guinea-Bissau during a meeting co-facilitated by my Special Representative and the ECOWAS Special Representative in Guinea-Bissau. On 24 April, the ECOWAS delegation met with civil society representatives, the Prime Minister, leaders of the political parties represented in Parliament, the group of 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC and the President. The mission underscored the urgent need to implement the Conakry Agreement and to hold peaceful and credible legislative and presidential elections in 2018 and 2019, respectively. It also informed stakeholders about plans to withdraw the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), starting from 28 April 2017, in compliance with the decision taken by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at the summit held on 17 December 2016 in Abuja. During consultations, the conflicting parties reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Agreement, while national stakeholders and representatives of civil society expressed fears that the withdrawal of ECOMIB could have a detrimental impact on security and stability in the country.

12. On 25 April, prior to leaving Bissau, the mission issued a final communiqué in which it recommended that, in the event of non-compliance with the Conakry Agreement, or lack of concrete steps to implement it within 30 days, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government impose targeted sanctions on individuals and entities that obstruct its smooth implementation.

13. The strong stance taken by the ECOWAS ministerial mission led to efforts to promote consultations among national stakeholders. On 5 May, the Government issued a statement indicating that the Prime Minister had invited political parties with parliamentary seats to consultations, on 2 and 3 May, within the framework of the Conakry Agreement. The statement noted that only PRS had accepted the invitation and added that the National Assembly was the appropriate forum for debating the crisis. Furthermore, the Government reiterated its determination to find solutions to the crisis and to ensure the normal functioning of the National Assembly.

14. On the same day, PAIGC issued a communiqué inviting members of the group of 15 parliamentarians expelled from membership in the party to confirm to its Commission on Dialogue and Reconciliation their interest in being reintegrated as members. On 17 May, following a meeting with the Commission, former Prime Minister Baciro Djá expressed his willingness to be reintegrated into PAIGC. During a press conference held on the same day in Bissau, several other members of the group of 15 parliamentarians confirmed their readiness to engage in dialogue with the party's leadership, provided that discussions would take place outside PAIGC headquarters.

15. On 15 May, representatives of PRS, the group of 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC and representatives of the New Democratic Party (PND) submitted a petition to the President reaffirming their support for both the Prime Minister and the President. However, in a letter dated 22 May addressed to President Alpha Condé, the president of PND, Iaia Djaló, clarified that the person who had signed the petition on behalf of the party had not been authorized to do so.

16. On 25 May, PRS held a rally in Bafatá, the capital of the Bafatá region. On the same day, in an interview with a local radio, the party's president, Alberto N'bunhe Nambeia, stated that international sanctions against political actors would not resolve but rather worsen the critical situation in the country.

17. On 1 June, a group of 18 political parties without parliamentary representation issued a press release blaming PAIGC and its president, as well as the Speaker of the National Assembly, for the situation in the country. The group called on ECOWAS to impose sanctions on PAIGC, its leader, the Speaker and their supporters for not complying with the Conakry Agreement.

18. On 24 May, my Special Representative convened a meeting with a newly established independent group of women's organizations, known as the women's facilitation group, to discuss concrete steps for women's engagement in the search for a consensual solution to the crisis. On 27 May, the Forum delivered a memorandum to UNIOGBIS, expressing the need to resolve the protracted divisions among political leaders and called for steps to end the continued exclusion of women in political processes. My Special Representative encouraged them to reclaim their rightful place in the national decision-making and peacebuilding arenas, including by enhancing their participation in the facilitation of dialogue among political stakeholders. In response, the women's facilitation group requested that UNIOGBIS provide technical and financial support for its engagement towards the resolution of the crisis. The Mission has provided such support.

19. The women's facilitation group subsequently met with the President, on 30 May, to advocate for genuine and direct dialogue with key political leaders. On the same day, the Forum issued a press release, appealing to political parties to engage in constructive dialogue for conflict resolution. On 2 June, representatives of the Forum met with my Special Representative to brief him on progress made in their facilitation efforts.

20. On 4 June, ECOWAS held the fifty-first ordinary session of its Authority of Heads of State and Government in Monrovia. In its final communiqué, the Authority: urged all stakeholders to comply with the provisions of the Conakry Agreement; extended the mandate of ECOMIB for three months to allow for the full implementation of the Accord; and affirmed its determination to institute, if needed, targeted sanctions against all entities acting to obstruct the smooth implementation of the Agreement. The Authority commended the continued non-interference of the Army in the political impasse, urging it to continue to maintain that posture; and directed the ECOWAS Commission to regularly assess, through a high-level ministerial committee, progress made towards implementation of the Agreement.

21. From 13 to 15 June, the Chair of the United Nations Sanctions Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2048 (2012), Ambassador Elbio Rosselli of Uruguay, visited Bissau. His visit aimed at gathering first-hand accounts about the implementation and effectiveness of the sanctions measures imposed by the Security Council and to discuss related political developments. The Chair met with the President, the Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and the Interior, military officers under sanctions, the President of the Supreme Court of Justice, leaders of political parties, the group of 15 expelled PAIGC parliamentarians and representatives of civil society, women's and youth organizations. He also held discussions with UNIOGBIS staff and other international partners. Addressing the media on 15 June, Ambassador Rosselli welcomed the exemplary behaviour of the military and noted that he would present his conclusions to the Sanctions Committee and the Security Council for assessment.

22. On 19 June, PAIGC, on behalf of the political parties represented in Parliament, with the exception of PRS, submitted a document to the Guinea-Bissau-based group of international partners putting forward modalities for the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. The document reiterated the proposal made by the Speaker in February 2017, which included a schedule for the implementation of the Agreement.

23. From 22 to 24 June, PAIGC held its first national convention in Bissau, gathering about 600 delegates. Former Prime Minister Baciro Djá, who held the position of third Vice-President of PAIGC prior to the crisis, participated in the event as an ordinary member of the party. The Convention adopted several recommendations, including the need to: clarify, through constitutional reform, the power and prerogatives vested in the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary, while maintaining the semi-presidential system; reform the electoral law and the political parties law; and minimize the recurrence of internal conflicts. The PAIGC convention also recommended that the president of the party have a say in the selection of the party's candidates for presidential and legislative elections, and reiterated the call for the appointment of Augusto Olivais as the consensus choice as Prime Minister within the framework of the Conakry Agreement. The Convention took place amidst heightened tensions between the mainstream membership of PAIGC and a faction of the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians, who accused the party's leadership of excluding all militants and senior members of the party suspected of supporting the group.

24. During a meeting with religious leaders on 26 June, President Vaz called for unity among all nationals of Guinea-Bissau and stressed that national stakeholders should do their best to overcome the country's challenges within the following 90 days. He called upon PAIGC, PRS and the group of 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC to come to an agreement and to facilitate the adoption of the Government's programme and State budget, adding that, in the event of non-agreement, he would call for early elections.

25. From 5 to 10 July, as a result of the advocacy efforts led by the women's facilitation group, the President held bilateral talks with the Speaker, the Prime Minister, the President of the Supreme Court of Justice as well as the leaders of PAIGC and PRS. The facilitation group informed my Special Representative that key political leaders had agreed to resume regular consultations and consider options to resolve the crisis in line with the Constitution and the Conakry Agreement. The group seized the opportunity to request further advisory and programmatic support from UNIOGBIS.

26. On 17 July, the African Union Peace and Security Council issued a communiqué expressing support for ECOWAS mediation efforts and urging the President to lead the way forward in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. It further urged all parties to refrain from actions or statements that could escalate tensions and incite violence, and called for respect for human rights and freedom of expression. The Council also expressed concern over the planned withdrawal of ECOMIB by September 2017, calling on the international community to mobilize financial resources to support the continuation of the mission, and decided to undertake a mission to Guinea-Bissau within 2017 to follow up on the implementation of the decisions of the African Union and ECOWAS and to engage with national stakeholders on the way forward.

B. Security situation

27. Overall, the security situation has remained stable, but tense. The protracted political crisis led to an intensification of demonstrations and, although most of them remained peaceful, the reporting period was marked by increased confrontations between law enforcement authorities and protesters.

28. On 5 May, ECOMIB initiated a withdrawal to barracks in anticipation of a full withdrawal from the country at a later stage. On 4 June, 65 members of the Nigerian contingent were repatriated. However, the ECOMIB withdrawal was subsequently halted by the decision of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government to extend the mandate of the mission for three months, until 30 September 2017.

C. Human rights situation

29. During the reporting period, there was no significant progress in ensuring compliance of the National Human Rights Commission with the Paris Principles, notably the principle of independence from the Government. No significant progress was observed with respect to the investigation of past gross human rights violations and the creation of related accountability mechanisms.

30. On a positive note, UNIOGBIS recorded progress in a legal process initiated by national authorities following the illegal arrest, torture and subsequent death of a 34-year-old citizen at a police station in Bissau on 23 January. The Prosecutor General charged eight police officers with grievous bodily harm on 22 February and on 9 June, one police officer was sentenced to three years and three months in prison and was instructed to pay compensation to the victim's family. The other seven suspects were acquitted owing to lack of evidence.

31. On 9 June, the Government of Guinea-Bissau undertook a self-assessment of its record in implementing international recommendations in the area of human rights, stimulating national dialogue among State institutions and civil society actors, youth and women representatives and other key stakeholders, with the support of UNIOGBIS. The event included representatives of the judiciary, the National Assembly, the Presidency, the concerned ministries and secretariats of State, and representatives of civil society and the international community.

32. On 27 June, the National Council for Social Communication and an association of journalists issued statements denouncing attempts to restrict freedom of speech and press freedom through intimidation. On 30 June, the Government suspended the broadcasting by the public service broadcasting organization of Portugal (*Rádio e Televisão de Portugal*). In response, the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League issued a statement condemning the decision and calling for a solution through dialogue.

33. UNIOGBIS documented incidents, including instances of detentions and the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement officials during a demonstration held on 27 May, which were condemned by Guinea-Bissau's Human Rights League. Following a protest organized on 8 April by the Movement of Conscientious and Nonconformist Citizens, the police briefly detained seven demonstrators on the basis of a law that prevents the holding of meetings or demonstrations in public places located at a specific distance from certain institution buildings. The police later released them, following efforts at facilitation by UNIOGBIS.

34. On 1 June, the Ministry of the Interior issued a press release, forbidding the organization of demonstrations planned for 3 and 4 June by the Movement of Conscientious and Nonconformist Citizens and "The Citizen" movement, on the

ground that the events could threaten public order and peace. On 2 June, the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League condemned the position of the Secretariat of State and urged the Government to abstain from acts likely to restrict the right to hold demonstrations.

D. Social, economic and humanitarian situation

35. The period under review was marked by continued positive economic performance. Growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) for 2017 is projected at about 5 per cent, slightly lower than the 5.1 per cent level of 2016, but much higher than the Sub-Saharan African average of 2.6 per cent. This is the combined result of an increase in cashew nut production and exports, growth in the construction sector, a more stable macroeconomic framework, increased public revenues (by 32.4 per cent), and enhanced discipline in the management of public finances. Total production of cashew nuts is estimated to exceed 170,000 tons, with prices at historically high levels (producers were being paid an average of 1,050 CFA francs ($1.75) per kilogram as at the end of June 2017). Despite the continued suspension of direct budget support, the Government has paid salaries on a regular basis and has covered some basic expenditures.

36. The Treasury Committee, which was established in 2016, and on which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank sit as observers, has improved its public expenditure management oversight role. The Committee has also provided a useful space for information sharing between the Government and its main development partners, focusing on greater fiscal discipline and transparency. However, additional and sustained efforts are needed to achieve greater efficiency in the allocation of public expenditure.

37. In May, IMF assessed the country's performance as being satisfactory overall, with tangible progress in the implementation of economic and financial reforms. Consequently, IMF approved an Extended Credit Facility arrangement in the amount of $3.03 million in special drawing rights. In addition, the World Bank Group endorsed the New Country Partnership Framework for Guinea-Bissau in an indicative amount of $90 million for the period from 2018 to 2021.

38. Despite the relatively positive economic performance, overall welfare and social conditions among the population remain challenging. Poverty remains high and pervasive, and there is limited improvement in the broader human development outcomes. In order to improve the availability and quality of data on poverty and to enhance understanding of the various dimensions of poverty, UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched a multidimensional poverty analysis in April 2017. The study is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

39. During the reporting period, strikes by labour unions in the justice and education sectors over delays in the payment of subsidies and salary arrears led to negotiations between the Government and the Union of Court Clerks, as well as with the two main teachers' unions. The agreements reached in both cases helped appease social tensions.

40. From February to April, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in printing and distributing primary school textbooks to 310,000 school-age children nationwide, in cooperation with the Global Partnership for Education, to improve quality of education in the country.

41. The World Health Organization (WHO) provided support to a joint mission organized by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the Global Fund

to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the World Bank from 3 to 7 April. The mission assessed the conditions for the country's eligibility to new funding models for the next three years.

42. From 31 May to 4 June, the Ministry of Health, United Nations actors (WHO, UNICEF and UNDP) and other partners jointly conducted a national campaign for the distribution of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets. About 1 million such nets were distributed to protect more than 2 million adults and children from malaria. Malaria deaths in Guinea-Bissau are over 30 per cent higher than in other West African countries, accounting for 15.8 per cent of all deaths. Children under five years of age are disproportionately affected, accounting for around 41 per cent of all cases and 45 per cent of all deaths.

III. Status of implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

A. Fostering inclusive political dialogue and supporting national reconciliation processes

43. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS focused on helping to prevent the escalation of tensions and violence, improve the political climate, restore confidence among political leaders and to open the space for dialogue and consensus. My Special Representative worked closely with the group of international partners based in Guinea-Bissau and consulted with key stakeholders, including the political parties, representatives of civil society, religious, traditional and other leading opinion makers, urging them to advocate for dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

44. In the light of the polarized political situation and the lack of genuine dialogue among key stakeholders, my Special Representative sought to promote the consensus-building efforts of a group of women opinion makers. UNIOGBIS provided strategic guidance and support, while ensuring that the women's facilitation group retained full ownership of the initiative. As a result, the group took the decision to inform all key stakeholders of the need for an urgent and consensual resolution of the political stalemate. Their determination and genuine commitment have led to bilateral talks between the President, the Speaker, the Prime Minister and the President of PAIGC for the first time since the crisis erupted in August 2015.

45. From 8 to 11 February, with the support of UNIOGBIS and the Peacebuilding Fund, the organizing commission for the national conference towards the consolidation of peace and development in Guinea-Bissau organized an international symposium on the theme "Facing the past to build the Guinea-Bissau of tomorrow". Over 250 participants attended, including the President, the Speaker, political leaders, representatives of national institutions, defence and security forces, civil society and academia. The organizing commission presented the results of consultations held at previous regional conferences and with nationals living in the diaspora from 2009 to the present date. At the end of the discussions, participants made several recommendations, including the need for the political leadership to engage in frank and open dialogue to unlock the current political impasse.

46. On 22 June, with the support of UNIOGBIS, the National Institute for Studies and Research launched a series of seven conferences on State reform. At the first

conference a debate was held on "The historical and sociological approach of the struggle for power in Guinea-Bissau". On 6 July, the National Institute held its second conference on "Political parties and the challenges of social cohesion and national political stabilization". About 50 scholars and students from Guinea-Bissau attended the first conference, and the number increased to 110 for the second conference. Both events were broadcast live on a local radio.

B. Review of Guinea-Bissau's Constitution

47. During the reporting period, national stakeholders made no progress in implementing the Conakry Agreement as it relates to the review of the Constitution. In view of the political and institutional crisis, the ad hoc commission on constitutional reform of the National Assembly did not convene.

C. National security sector reform and rule of law strategies

48. UNIOGBIS continued to work in cooperation with the African Union, ECOWAS and the European Union to assist national stakeholders in reviewing the country's strategy for security sector reform, adopted in 2006, to include maritime security sector reform. The mission assisted national defence authorities to advance civil-military relations, including through support to the civil-military relations programme of the National Defence Institute and in the development of a national strategy for civil-military relations.

49. UNIOGBIS supported efforts by the Ministries of Defence and the Interior and the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, including a sensitization initiative launched on 25 May to provide guidance to military and security personnel to prevent interference in the political process and ensure subordination to the legal chain of command.

50. Consultations are ongoing between UNIOGBIS and the Government to address challenges related to the security sector reform, the demobilization and socioeconomic reintegration of military and security personnel.

D. Mobilization, harmonization and coordination of international assistance

51. My Special Representative has convened regular meetings of the international and regional partners based in Guinea-Bissau aimed at fostering a shared understanding of the evolving situation and ensuring a coordinated approach and messaging by the international community.

52. At the regional level, my Special Representative stepped up his good offices to help facilitate and support a sustained, inclusive and coordinated engagement by ECOWAS. He travelled to Monrovia, Conakry and Dakar to discuss the objectives, timing and modalities of the ECOWAS ministerial mission to Bissau. Shortly after the ECOWAS summit in Monrovia, on 16 June, my Special Representative visited Lomé where he met President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé in his capacity as the new Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. They discussed short-term prospects, possible scenarios and support modalities for the conduct of a successful ECOWAS mediation process in Guinea-Bissau.

53. On 13 April, a visiting delegation of the International Organization of La Francophonie met with representatives of UNIOGBIS and the diplomatic community in Bissau. The delegation informed participants of its exchanges with

national stakeholders and reaffirmed the need to impress on stakeholders the importance of urgently implementing the Conakry Agreement.

54. On 12 May, the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission released a statement on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, commending the diplomatic efforts of ECOWAS and encouraging its leaders to continue the mediation process to end the political deadlock. The configuration reiterated support for the ECOWAS-brokered six-point road map and the Conakry Agreement, and expressed hope that the withdrawal of ECOMIB would be conducted in a way that would not undermine political stability. It strongly urged all key political actors to engage in dialogue and urged restraint, moderation and commitment to resolve the political crisis.

E. Strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing the capacity of State organs

55. The political and institutional stalemate hampered UNIOGBIS efforts to assist national authorities in strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing the capacity of State organs, including the National Assembly. UNIOGBIS commissioned the International Institute for Security Studies to support national stakeholders in implementing the provisions of the Conakry Agreement relating to institutional reforms. The Institute carried out a technical mission to Bissau from 20 to 24 March to prepare the groundwork for the holding of consultations with national and international experts on a stability pact. It is hoped that the completion of the process will help create a climate conducive to peaceful and credible elections and lead to strengthened State institutions.

56. On 25 March, UNIOGBIS held two separate meetings in Bafatá, with the acting Governor of the region, Alfa Djaló, and representatives of civil society organizations and traditional leaders. The Governor and civil society representatives expressed support for the organization of local elections, which they viewed as a key step towards decentralization and local development, while also emphasizing the need to resolve the political impasse ahead of the elections.

F. Law enforcement, criminal justice and penitentiary systems

57. Against the backdrop of growing political tensions, UNIOGBIS advised relevant national authorities about the responsible use of force and best practices in the maintenance of public order, and on citizens' rights during demonstrations. UNIOGBIS also provided technical support and advice to the National Guard on the review and development of conduct and discipline policies, as well as appeal procedures and standards.

58. In addition, UNIOGBIS provided technical assistance to a conference on international police and judicial cooperation held in Bissau in May. Sponsored by the Portuguese rule of law consolidated assistance project and facilitated by experts from Brazil and Portugal, the event brought together about 100 law practitioners from Guinea-Bissau to discuss, inter alia: the linkages between the rule of law and criminal justice; the need for efficient inter-agency and transnational police and judicial assistance cooperation; the importance of combating serious transnational organized crime; and migrant smuggling. UNIOGBIS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) supported the engagement of the National Audit Court with stakeholders on discussions of impunity and corruption in the public sector. UNIOGBIS and UNODC supported the National Audit Court in the organization of a workshop, on 27 April, on fighting impunity and corruption in the public sector.

59. UNIOGBIS helped reinforce the investigative capabilities of 34 National Guard Officers. The mission also contributed to strengthening the capabilities of Public Order Police officers in the collection and use of crime statistics to guide focused patrols. It further provided strategic and technical guidance for the development of strategic plans by law enforcement agencies.

60. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS worked closely with the Superior Council for Police and Internal Security Coordination to improve national inter-agency coordination of law enforcement agencies on methods to curb drug trafficking, sexual exploitation of children and trafficking in persons, the safety of maritime passengers and crime prevention strategies.

61. To extend the provision of justice services throughout the country, UNIOGBIS has initiated, together with the Supreme Court, the development of mobile criminal justice teams.

62. UNIOGBIS contributed to increased awareness of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) through support for technical evaluation visits by the Director General of Prisons to the detention facilities in Mansôa, in the Oio region, and in Bafatá. Working with the Director General, UNIOGBIS developed recommendations for the rehabilitation of the Mansôa facility.

G. Promotion and protection of human rights

63. Following regular monitoring and assessment of detention conditions by the UNIOGBIS Human Rights Section, the mission advocated increased compliance with human rights standards, including through dissemination to State officials and other stakeholders of a guide on the rights of detainees elaborated by UNIOGBIS, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice. Monitoring activities also covered conditions in medical facilities and the demonstrations and strikes organized during the reporting period.

64. From 21 to 29 February, UNIOGBIS trained 30 police officers, 30 National Guard officers and 45 military officers in Bissau and in the regions of Bafatá and Buba on the protection of human rights and gender equality. From 5 to 9 June, UNIOGBIS, in collaboration with the UNDP-funded Judicial Training Centre, concluded a series of training courses on human rights and the administration of justice for 40 civil and military judges and prosecutors, lawyers and members of the Judiciary Police, including five women. The training workshop focused on: women and children's rights in the administration of justice; the role of courts in protecting economic, social and cultural rights; the protection of freedom of thought, conscience, expression and religion; and the right to peaceful assembly.

65. On 8 June, UNIOGBIS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a joint report on the right to health in Guinea-Bissau. In the joint press release issued on the occasion, my Special Representative stressed that the realization of the right to health has a strong link with the peacebuilding process in Guinea-Bissau. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, underscored the duty of the State to ensure the right to health, and called on donors to continue supporting the activities of the Government of Guinea-Bissau in this regard.

66. From 17 March to 9 June, UNIOGBIS helped enhance national capacity for the protection and promotion of respect for human rights and gender equality through the dissemination of recommendations made by international human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, the treaty bodies and the

special procedures of the Human Rights Council, to Government officials, parliamentarians, judges, prosecutors, civil servants, civil society organizations and international non-governmental organizations.

67. From 19 to 23 June, UNIOGBIS concluded a series of training sessions for human rights focal points in the Army by providing a training workshop in Cacheu, capital of the Cacheu region, to 35 military officials, including one woman.

H. Combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

68. During the reporting period, UNODC and UNIOGBIS supported the actions of Guinea-Bissau's Transnational Crime Unit in order to strengthen its ability to conduct intelligence-based drug trafficking investigations, including through enhanced regional and international cooperation, as part of the West Africa Coast Initiative. They also supported the Anti-Trafficking Cell, within the framework of the international Airport Communication Programme.

69. In conjunction with training provided by the Brazilian Federal Police in the context of the Airport Communication Programme, UNIOGBIS and UNODC trained members of the Judiciary Police, the Public Order Police, the Immigration and Customs Services and INTERPOL on the threats of organized crime, drug-related issues, human trafficking, as well as corruption and its linkage to other crimes.

70. On 21 April, UNIOGBIS and UNODC provided strategic and technical guidance to enable verification, transportation and incineration of 46.3 kilograms of cocaine, 2 litres of liquid cocaine and 584.03 kilograms of marijuana, which were held by the Judiciary Police. Since the beginning of 2017, the Judiciary Police and the Transnational Crime Unit have reported seizures of 2.9 kilograms of cocaine and 392 kilograms of marijuana.

71. On 9 May, UNIOGBIS was informed of the approval by the National Guard of the report on the assessment of the terrestrial and maritime border posts, which had been prepared with UNIOGBIS support. Its approval enabled the Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force to proceed with the refurbishment and equipping of select border posts. The mission also supported mentoring and training visits to the National Guard border posts to strengthen national technical capabilities for customs and migration.

72. UNODC supported the improvement of law enforcement capacities for maritime border control and patrols, including through the delivery, in June, of two boats, to be made available to Transnational Crime Unit, the Judiciary Police and the National Guard. UNODC also provided individual officers of the Crime Unit with ballistic protection equipment and a thermal night vision camera for undercover surveillance, as well as police uniforms and other individual items of police equipment.

73. On Bubaque island in the Bijagós archipelago in the Bolama region, UNIOGBIS provided technical assistance for working meetings between business stakeholders and law enforcement agencies in order to address weak border control, drug trafficking, illegal immigration and human trafficking. UNODC also supported the assembly of a prefabricated outpost for the Judiciary Police in Bubaque, which helped to increase its operational presence.

I. Incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding

74. From 27 February to 1 March, in the regions of Bafatá, Buba, and Quinara, UNIOGBIS, in partnership with the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, organized a training session on women's human rights and gender equality for 105 members, including 40 women, of the country's defence and security institutions. The training workshop focused on gender perspectives and the introduction of gender quotas in the recruitment process within the framework of the defence and security sector reforms.

75. On 8 March, the Government and civil society organizations celebrated International Women's Day, with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and in partnership with all United Nations agencies. On the occasion, the Institute for Women and Children presented the National Gender Policy and its action plan to the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Solidarity. On the same day, the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Solidarity officially launched its Gender Department, in partnership with UN-Women.

76. From 28 to 31 March, UNIOGBIS and five members of the national Women's Political Platform participated in a joint mission to the Gambia with the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel, organized with the support of ECOWAS, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, UN-Women, UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund. The women leaders met with the national authorities and expressed solidarity with the people of the Gambia, especially women and girls, after the country's post-election crisis.

77. On 19 and 20 April, UN-Women organized a national conference on women's participation in decision-making processes to discuss the challenges facing women, and women in Guinea-Bissau society in general, in the current political situation and to make recommendations for peace and stability in the country. The conference, which was facilitated by the Women's Political Platform and the women's parliamentary caucus, brought together 198 participants, including 49 men, from women's organizations, the National Assembly and former female Ministers. On the occasion, UNIOGBIS delivered a training session on women and resource control to women parliamentarians and representatives of civil society organizations.

J. Preparation for legislative and presidential elections in 2018 and 2019

78. On 28 March, the National Electoral Commission officially released the final report on the 2014 legislative and presidential elections in Guinea-Bissau. The event was preceded by a seminar on outstanding challenges ahead of the upcoming elections. During the seminar, the Executive Secretary of the Commission, Idrissa Djaló, informed participants of the intention of the Commission to draft relevant draft laws to submit to the National Assembly. He also stressed the urgency of updating the voters' register and the mapping of electoral constituencies, with a view to easuring the smooth and timely conduct of legislative and local elections. Participants discussed the pros and cons of holding legislative and local elections separately or simultaneously. While some expressed preference fo. combined elections in the interest of time and cost, others favoured separate ballots, observing that civic education efforts would be required ahead of the local elections.

79. A United Nations electoral needs-assessment mission to Guinea-Bissau was undertaken from 25 April to 2 May, pursuant to a request by the Prime Minister for

technical and financial assistance to update the constituency delimitation and the voters' register ahead of the legislative and local elections. The members of the mission, who held consultations with representatives of the country's electoral management bodies and a wide range of national and international stakeholders, concluded that delays in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement had negatively affected efforts to advance dialogue and review the legal framework ahead of the legislative and presidential elections in 2018 and 2019.

80. On 17 May, the group of international partners based in Guinea-Bissau met with President Vaz to convey their concerns over delays in implementing the Conakry Agreement. Addressing the media on behalf of the group, the Special Representative of the African Union in Guinea-Bissau reported that the issue of the legislative elections had been raised, including the preparatory steps required to ensure their integrity, fairness and transparency. He added that a resolution of the political impasse was necessary to enable preparations for the elections.

81. On 7 June, the Interim President of the National Electoral Commission submitted a proposed timeline to President Vaz for the 2018 legislative elections. When addressing the press at the end of the meeting, he refrained from publicly discussing details of the electoral calendar, but stated that local elections would take place 6 to 12 months after the holding of legislative elections.

82. On 17 July, the African Union Peace and Security Council issued a statement on the situation in Guinea-Bissau in which it underlined the urgent need for "institutional arrangements" to enable the timely holding of elections.

IV. Cross-cutting issues

A. Integration of the United Nations system

83. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS initiated the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations inter-agency strategic review mission to Guinea-Bissau, which was led by the Department of Political Affairs in December 2016 and outlined in my last report to the Security Council (S/2017/111, paras. 68-75). As recommended by the strategic review mission, and approved by the Council, in June, I appointed a new Deputy Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau and Deputy Head of UNIOGBIS, David McLachlan-Karr. The Deputy Special Representative will provide leadership and oversight of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions Section of UNIOGBIS and will lead the United Nations Country Team in Guinea-Bissau, in his capacity as United Nations Resident Coordinator. Mr. McLachlan-Karr presented his credentials to the President on 19 July. In line with the mission's recommendations, UNIOGBIS has initiated steps to redeploy staff to the Political Affairs Section to support the good offices of my Special Representative, as well as to ramp up the mission's rotational presence outside Bissau and to strengthen synergies with the United Nations country team.

84. Under the leadership of my Special Representative, UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team continued to work with national authorities within the framework of the 2016-2020 Guinea Bissau-United Nations Partnership Framework.

85. On 12 April, UNIOGBIS and the secretariat of the Peacebuilding Fund organized a one-day retreat with the United Nations country team to reflect on the peacebuilding priority plan for Guinea-Bissau. The retreat was part of a larger effort to update and realign the priority plan to the political context and to develop short and medium-term perspectives for the country's peacebuilding portfolio, based on lessons learned and system-wide good practices.

86. In June, the joint programme on police, justice and corrections in Guinea-Bissau was finalized within the framework of the Global Focal Point arrangement. Following endorsement by the Government, the joint programme is expected to strengthen system-wide assistance to rule of law institutions, with the support of UNIOGBIS, UNDP, UNODC, UNICEF and UN-Women.

87. On 18 June, the World Bank and the United Nations adopted a plan to support national government capacity for the delivery of basic services. The plan aims to improve coordination and information sharing and to promote joint analysis, planning and programming between the two institutions.

B. Public information

88. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS adjusted its political communication strategy and, together with the United Nations country team, developed a joint United Nations communication strategy in line with the recommendations of the strategic review mission. It also strengthened its outreach in the Bubaque region through the deployment of one national United Nations Volunteer as a Public Information Assistant.

89. In addition, the mission: produced and broadcast 14 radio programmes in Bissau-Guinean creole language, focusing on its mandate, peacebuilding efforts, cultural diversity, malaria prevention and freedom of the press, among other issues; expanded the 50-minute live United Nations radio programme to include with a human rights segment and a 20-minute call-in session; issued a total of 30 press releases on United Nations activities; and translated into Portuguese and disseminated 12 relevant press statements from United Nations Headquarters. UNIOGBIS also drafted and posted 30 articles in English and Portuguese on its website. The mission also published about 180 posts in English and Portuguese on its Facebook page describing United Nations activities in Guinea-Bissau, including the good offices of my Special Representative. On 23 March, an external newsletter featuring the work of the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau ("*I Kuma*") was launched, and a total of 3,000 copies were distributed throughout the country.

90. From 12 April to 10 May, UNIOGBIS, in partnership with civil society organizations, completed a round of community outreach meetings across the country to raise awareness of notions of citizenship, the rule of law, democracy and human rights, including the screening of a film, "The citizen and the State", produced by UNIOGBIS in 2016, and the dissemination of a guide on human rights elaborated by UNIOGBIS.

91. UNIOGBIS also supported an international conference on the negative impact of corruption organized by the national judges' association on 15 June, as well as outreach activities on the prevention of drug abuse and trafficking organized by the National Observatory on Drug Abuse from 27 June to 1 July.

C. Staff safety and security

92. The overall security situation in Guinea-Bissau remained calm despite the prolonged political stalemate. No significant incidents involving United Nations personnel were reported, except for one road traffic accident in which a pedestrian was injured.

V. Observations

93. The political crisis in Guinea-Bissau has continued over the last two years, with no immediate end in sight. In the absence of a settlement, there is a risk of further deterioration of the political and security situation, particularly as the 2018 legislative elections draw near. I urge the President, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the leaders of PAIGC and PRS, as well as all other political leaders to demonstrate genuine political will and sincerity and to act decisively to end the crisis through dialogue and consensus. These leaders are responsible for ensuring a durable solution, based on the ECOWAS road map and the Conakry Agreement. The United Nations remains committed to support their efforts in implementing the key reforms outlined in the Conakry Agreement before the elections.

94. I commend the mediation efforts led by ECOWAS, including its Mediator, President Alpha Condé of Guinea, and the outgoing Chair of the ECOWAS Authority, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia. I congratulate President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé of Togo on his designation as the new Chair of the Authority, and encourage him to continue the indispensable support of ECOWAS for a swift resolution of the crisis. I further welcome the extension by ECOWAS of the mandate of ECOMIB for three months, until September 2017.

95. I take note of the determination of the ECOWAS Authority to institute, if needed, targeted sanctions against those who obstruct the smooth implementation of the Conakry Agreement. In line with the ECOWAS position, I request that the Security Council consider all necessary means to ensure the speedy resolution of the crisis, should it persist.

96. I also take note of the continued non-interference in the political affairs of the country by the defence and security institutions of Guinea-Bissau, particularly the armed forces, and encourage them to maintain that posture while playing their constitutionally mandated role.

97. I welcome the increasing engagement of women in Guinea-Bissau in the political process and congratulate them on their role in facilitating dialogue between President Vaz and key political leaders. I encourage national authorities to increase efforts to reach equal participation of women in the country's decision-making processes.

98. I welcome the steps taken by relevant national authorities to assess the country's record in implementing international human rights treaty obligations and to follow up on the recommendations of the joint UNIOGBIS-OHCHR report on the right to health. I encourage the authorities to finalize the ratification of pending human rights instruments and to ensure that the statute of the National Human Rights Commission is aligned with the Paris Principles, including the principle of independence of the Commission from the Government.

99. In the context of multidimensional global and regional threats to peace and stability, I urge the national authorities to remain vigilant and to intensify their efforts for improved border management and maritime security. There is also a need for better operational capacity of law enforcement and criminal justice systems to fight drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. I call on international partners to support the country in this regard. International support is also required to extend community policing throughout the country.

100. I am concerned that progress on the reform of defence and security institutions has been delayed, hampering their modernization. I urge political leaders in Guinea-Bissau to resolve the institutional crisis and to facilitate reforms, and I call on all partners to support the country in implementing the changes required in this regard.

I also believe that a police academy and a military academy, which are to be established in the future, will act as critical enablers for the professionalization of defence and security personnel, and encourage partners to support the development of such national institutions.

101. Assistance in the functioning of the country's essential public services, especially in the education and health sectors, is indispensable. I welcome the sustained engagement of all international partners present in the country and their concerted efforts, in particular the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, ECOWAS, the European Union, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the African Development Bank, the West African Development Bank and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as bilateral donors. I encourage them to continue supporting Guinea-Bissau's national strategic and operational plan for the period from 2016 to 2020, and to honour the commitments made in the March 2015 donor round table in Brussels.

102. My Special Representative will continue to work closely with national, regional and international stakeholders to mobilize and invest financial, human and technical resources in designing and implementing programmes and projects to build greater resilience and better equip Guinea-Bissau to address challenges related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

103. To ensure the scaled up support of the international community for the political, development, security and human rights challenges in Guinea Bissau, I exhort the country's key political actors to demonstrate a high sense of responsibility by swiftly ending the ongoing political stalemate.

104. I wish to express my appreciation to the staff of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team, under the leadership of my Special Representative, Modibo Ibrahim Touré, for their commitment and hard work, as well as to bilateral, regional and international partners for their continuing contributions to peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau.

United Nations A/72/312–S/2017/696

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
10 August 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Item 39 of the provisional agenda*
The situation in Afghanistan

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Special report on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 2344 (2017), in which the Council requested me to conduct a strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) with the goal of assessing the Mission's efficiency and effectiveness in order to optimize the division of labour to ensure better cooperation between United Nations-related organizations. It comprises the findings of the strategic review and my recommendations concerning the mandated tasks, priorities and configuration of UNAMA on the basis of an in-depth review of the Mission.

2. The strategic review team, led by my Special Representative for Iraq, met a wide range of stakeholders in Afghanistan and New York in May and early June 2017, including the President, the Chief Executive, Cabinet members, key members of parliament and political parties, civil society organizations, women's groups and representatives of the diplomatic and donor community, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations. The review also considered the comprehensive review conducted in 2012 (see A/66/728-S/2012/133), internal assessments in the intervening years and the final report of the Tripartite Review Commission on the United Nations in Afghanistan, submitted to the Security Council in September 2015 (see S/2015/713). Lastly, the present report was informed by my own visit to Kabul on 14 June 2017, where I met with the President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, and the Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah, as well as the UNAMA senior leadership and Afghans displaced by conflict.

3. The recommendations arising from the strategic review are calibrated to prepare the United Nations engagement until the end of 2020, the same time frame as for commitments to financial and military assistance made at the summits held in 2016 in Brussels and Warsaw, thereby contributing to a coherent international engagement in Afghanistan. I should note that while the recommendations are

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specific to Afghanistan and were formulated following an in-depth review of the situation and the role of UNAMA, they are consistent with my broader vision for the United Nations in the current global context. In particular, they emphasize the priority of conflict prevention and sustaining peace, on the basis of an expansive understanding of peacebuilding that stresses the political factors but incorporates economic, social and institutional factors. They are also consistent with the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see A/70/95-S/2015/446) and the subsequent implementation report of my predecessor (A/70/357-S/2015/682), which stressed unity of effort across the United Nations family, and with my own determination that the United Nations as a system deliver for Member States in a more coherent and effective way.

II. Background

4. Since the establishment of UNAMA in 2002, the Mission's role has been defined by its support for the transition process outlined in the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, signed in Bonn, Germany, in December 2001, also referred to as the Bonn Agreement. The implementation of the Agreement was premised on the transition to a post-conflict environment, with an armed opposition acting against rather than as a serious hindrance to the achievement of peace and prosperity. In subsequent years, the adoption of a constitution, expanded protection for human rights and civil liberties, democratic elections for the President and parliament and the establishment and growing effectiveness of government and State institutions have been seen. All of those processes were closely supported by UNAMA. Despite progress in those areas, the Taliban-led insurgency began to gain ground, particularly after 2006. Against that backdrop, Afghanistan entered a new phase in 2014 with the peaceful transition from one elected President to another and the transfer of security responsibilities from the International Security Assistance Force, led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

5. The role of UNAMA evolved as the situation in Afghanistan changed, and the Mission's mandate and scope of activities expanded. Following a phase of expansion, the Mission's strength has been contracting since 2011. In recognition of the sovereignty of Afghanistan and as Afghan State institutions continued to gain capacity, UNAMA increasingly played a supporting role in alignment with the priorities of State institutions. However, real and meaningful progress notwithstanding, the Afghan State currently continues to rely heavily on the international community, both financially and in terms of security support. More than 60 per cent of the Government's budget is financed by foreign donors, and despite immense resources spent on institution-building, at moments of crisis Afghan institutions are at times perceived to be insufficiently effective at mediating between powerful interests and factions that retain autonomous capacities for violence.

6. These internal political rivalries take place in a context in which the legitimacy of the State is contested by the Taliban insurgency. During the early years of the implementation of the Bonn Agreement, it was predicted that the insurgency could be contained or diminished. Subsequent developments proved contrary to that assumption. A political settlement is therefore required. Efforts to begin negotiations towards that end have been made over the past few years, but so far have gained little traction.

7. It is this overall environment — defined by a fragile political consensus among those who recognize the constitutional order and an increasingly violent and sustained insurgency by those who reject that order — in which the United Nations is now operating. Doing so demands a reorientation of its activities. I strongly recommend that the ultimate goal of the Mission over the next several years be to support all efforts to reach sustainable peace and self-reliance in Afghanistan.

8. The strategic review analysed the context and made recommendations on how UNAMA and the wider United Nations system should respond to it in pursuit of the overarching goal: a stable and prosperous Afghanistan with good neighbourly relations, where human rights are upheld and basic services are available to all.

III. Main findings of the strategic review

9. The key observation regarding the current situation in Afghanistan that guides all subsequent recommendations is that Afghanistan is not in a post-conflict situation, where sufficient stability exists to focus on institution-building and development-oriented activities, but a country undergoing a conflict that shows few signs of abating. That is not to say that progress has not occurred, only that it continues to be challenged by the effects of the ongoing conflict, which also threatens the sustainability of the achievements. It is important to underline that institution-building and development can still occur in a conflict, but the United Nations focus must now be as outlined in subsequent sections of the present report.

10. Afghanistan continues to face significant political, security, socioeconomic, humanitarian and human rights challenges. While macroeconomic indicators have improved, including revenue collection, poverty among the rural and urban population has increased. High population growth and accelerated urbanization have created a bulge of mostly urban, unemployed and alienated youth and with it a potential breeding ground for radicalization. Several social indicators remain unsatisfactory, including rising unemployment and uneven access to primary education, health services and justice. The population in need of humanitarian assistance has increased. Significant progress has been made in promoting women's rights and participation, but women in Afghanistan remain unequal partners in the country's political, social and economic spheres. Corruption is widely regarded as a key factor that continues to undermine public trust and confidence in State institutions and thereby further fuels conflict. Improved accountability and good governance, on the other hand, would contribute to stability and peacebuilding.

11. A major achievement of the early implementation of the Bonn process was the agreement on a forward-looking constitution for Afghanistan and the holding of elections to legitimize executive and legislative authority. Despite an erosion in confidence owing to widespread allegations of fraud in previous elections, there remains among Afghan people today a strong aspiration to have the constitutional order observed. For the purposes of domestic political cohesion, it is important that parliamentary elections be held as scheduled in 2018 and presidential elections in 2019, and that both processes be seen as credible by the Afghan electorate.

12. The National Unity Government, established by a political agreement in 2014 after the election results were contested, continues to be under strain. Security and political developments, such as the mass casualty terror attack of 31 May 2017 and subsequent violent clashes between protesters and security forces, exacerbate the friction among the political elites and fuel popular discontent. The attack also led to a significant reduction in the presence of international diplomatic and development actors. Popular discontent has increasingly been demonstrated through large-scale street protests that risk provoking further instability. While the President and the

Chief Executive have stated their commitment to the National Unity Government, political posturing and factional allegiances, often along ethnic lines, have increased ahead of the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections.

13. The negotiation and partial implementation of a peace agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who had previously violently contested the State, was a signal achievement. While the re-emergence of Mr. Hekmatyar on the political scene has generated concern among some Afghan political actors, as well as civil society representatives, including with regard to human rights and ethnic aspects, the agreement demonstrated the ability of Afghan leaders to make the hard choices that peace requires.

14. The overall security situation has deteriorated over the past few years, as the Taliban have been able to influence and, to some extent, control ever larger parts of the country. While some representatives of the Taliban may recognize the need for a political settlement, others feel that they have the upper hand militarily. The situation has been described as an eroding stalemate in which the Taliban have increased the territory they are able to contest and, in some areas, have begun to consolidate their hold. The emergence of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant — Khorasan Province, although still relatively small in numbers, has added a new, dangerous dimension to an already complex situation. Multiple terror groups, many with regional and international ambitions and often of foreign origin, work in fluid nexuses with local and transnational criminal networks spreading extremism, narcotics, weapons and funding of terror across borders. Opiate production in 2016 is estimated to have generated over $3 billion, much of which supports the insurgency.

15. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, with the support of advisers from the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, currently hold major population centres but have ceded much ground to the Taliban in rural areas. Attrition rates within the national defence forces are unsustainably high, and morale is suffering. A four-year plan currently envisaged by the national defence forces and the Resolute Support Mission is designed to reverse the situation by enabling the national defence forces to be capable of sustaining themselves to initiate decisive counteroffensives in the next two years. This will require the continued support of the international community and the strong will of the Government.

16. The conflict exerts an unacceptable toll on Afghans, particularly civilians. In 2016, UNAMA documented over 11,000 civilian casualties (3,498 deaths), a record number compared to previous years, and an increase in child casualties by 24 per cent. With over 6,000 killed and 15,000 wounded, 2016 became the worst year for Afghan security forces, and the Taliban are likely to have suffered similarly high casualties. Around 650,000 people were internally displaced by the conflict in 2016, while more than 620,000 refugees and undocumented individuals returned from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. So far in 2017, fighting in many parts of the country has further intensified, with persisting record high levels of civilian casualties, especially among women and children, and significant displacement.

17. Peace negotiations between the Government and the armed opposition, including direct peace talks with the Taliban, are the only alternative for ending the drawn-out bloody armed conflict in Afghanistan. Earlier in 2017, the President presented his vision for peace to international donors in Kabul and, on 6 June, the Government convened the Kabul process conference on peace and security cooperation to bring under its leadership the different regional and international initiatives.

18. Yet the international consensus on Afghanistan that was a key factor behind early successes is fraying. The Kabul conference represents the Government's resolve to gather the existing multiple parallel peace initiatives under Afghan leadership. Nonetheless, the dynamic in the region needs to improve. Despite numerous public pronouncements on the need for regional cooperation, actors from the region are engaged in Afghanistan on behalf of their particular interests rather than making the compromises necessary to engage on behalf of the common regional interest in stability.

19. A shift towards a peace process through negotiations calls for a parallel adjustment of the role of UNAMA — and the wider United Nations system — from supporting a post-Bonn, post-conflict peacebuilding agenda towards supporting an Afghan-owned peace process that must eventually include direct negotiations with the Taliban.

20. Among the most consistent findings of the strategic review from interlocutors was the recognition of the added value of the United Nations as an impartial actor, and in particular the convening power of UNAMA and its access to all political stakeholders. In the past, this has been particularly useful in, for example, mediating electoral disputes, reporting and engaging parties to the conflict on protection issues and human rights abuses, and promoting the rule of law and international norms. Between the time of reporting and 2020, it is likely that UNAMA will be called upon to act as an impartial mediator between various competing interests within the Government, between the Government and its armed opposition and within the region.

IV. Strategic priorities: the primacy of peace

21. In line with the principle of Afghan sovereignty and the overarching goal of the United Nations to enable a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, the strategic priorities of a special political mission and of the wider United Nations system in Afghanistan should be:

(a) To work with all actors to promote cohesion within the Government and support the development of institutions that, among other things, are able to mediate political differences;

(b) To support all efforts to create conditions in which a political settlement can be reached to end the conflict, including by maintaining contacts with all parties to the conflict;

(c) To support, in alignment with the Government's priorities, endorsed by donors at the conference held in Brussels in 2016, the provision of essential services to the Afghan population and to work to create economic and social conditions that can lead to self-reliance and sustain an eventual negotiated peace.

22. In its pursuit of those priorities, the United Nations should draw on its normative role and use its convening powers to create consensus on political and constitutional arrangements that protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghans, and promote the accountability and inclusiveness of the institutions of Afghanistan. The emphasis on peace and conflict prevention will require some changes in the Mission's configuration.

23. The strategic leadership role of my Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA across the political, human rights and development spheres is essential. In exercising overall leadership of the Mission, the Special Representative would continue to be responsible for overseeing the work of the two pillars,

political and developmental, and for ensuring their coherence in fulfilment of the strategic priorities proposed in the present report. The Special Representative will also report to me on how the resources of the Organization may best be used in fulfilment of the mandate with which he or she is entrusted. This will require a higher degree of alignment between and transparency from the wider United Nations system and governing bodies of system agencies, funds and programmes, as well as donors.

V. Reinforced political role

24. The strategic priorities identified will require that renewed prominence be given to supporting peace efforts in all of the Mission's substantive functions, in line with my emphasis on integrating conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding into the three pillars of the work of the United Nations. It will also necessitate an institutional structure that reinforces the Mission's political capacity and enables UNAMA, as well as the development and, to the extent possible while adhering to humanitarian principles, humanitarian activities of the United Nations to contribute comprehensively to peace efforts under the leadership of my Special Representative.

25. The political pillar would be headed by a Deputy Special Representative, who would be the Special Representative's principle adviser on political issues. The Deputy Special Representative (Political) would, in consultation with and under the direct guidance of the Special Representative, oversee the varied activities within the pillar. The main functions, some of which are currently disbursed throughout the Mission, that need to be consolidated within the political pillar are: (a) support for internal political stability; (b) support for credible elections in 2018 and 2019; (c) support for an eventual Afghan-owned peace process and reconciliation; and (d) an improvement in regional cooperation around Afghanistan with the objective of securing peace in Afghanistan. All of those functions bear directly on the achievement of the first two strategic priorities and indirectly on the achievement of the third priority.

26. With regard to internal political stability, UNAMA should enhance its efforts to address internal political fragmentation that threatens the stability of the Government, contributes to deepening political and ethnic fault lines and makes the consensus required for peace negotiations more difficult to achieve. To ensure the representativeness and sustainability of the institutions of Afghanistan, UNAMA should pay particular attention to the participation of women and youth in political processes. It should promote a stable and inclusive political environment with respect for the rule of law and constitutional norms and conduct broad outreach to diverse stakeholders, with a focus on building support for the Government's reform agenda and the credibility of government institutions and on improving transparency and accountability.

27. The Mission should, at the request of the Government, support the organization of credible, widely acceptable elections, including efforts to strengthen the sustainability, integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral process. A key component of this would be the provision of capacity-building support and technical advice to the electoral management bodies, in particular, the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission, in the discharge of their independent roles. The Mission should also support the electoral bodies in their outreach activities as they seek to build political consensus and understanding around an improved electoral process. Such efforts require strong coherence across United Nations entities and the wider international community.

Currently, United Nations support for elections — the date for holding parliamentary and district council elections was recently set for 7 July 2018 — is provided through an electoral support team that comprises elements from UNAMA and the United Nations Development Programme. I endorse this integrated approach, which brings together political and technical elements and might include other United Nations agencies; implementation of the programme would continue to be funded entirely through donor support.

28. A peace process in Afghanistan, including negotiations with the Taliban, must be Afghan-owned; nonetheless, the region and the broader international community also have a stake and influence in helping to create the conditions for peace. At the Kabul process conference of 6 June, the President confirmed that a "strengthened UNAMA would be a key counterpart in this process". Likewise, international and national stakeholders have indicated that the involvement of an impartial actor, such as the United Nations, will be needed to lend credibility and legitimacy to any such process. If requested, UNAMA should therefore support an Afghan-led process through advice on mediation, confidence-building measures, transitional justice, the protection of human rights and civilians, the promotion of international values and norms and the engagement of the armed opposition. Public engagement would also be a key aspect of this, and national dialogue initiatives, such as the Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace, will be important tools on which to build in efforts to ensure that the views of the traditionally marginalized, including residents of rural and remote areas, women and youth, are fed into the high-level political process.

29. As part of its efforts to create an environment conducive to a peace process, UNAMA should continue to support the work and the capacity of the High Peace Council as it reorients its activities towards nationwide consensus-building. This could conceivably include the training of High Peace Council staff and members, assistance with process design and the provision of political and technical expertise in the implementation of peace agreements. The Mission could also work to strengthen the Government's engagement with civil society, community leaders, women's groups and religious elders in peacebuilding activities. Concurrently, the Mission could assist local partners in promoting a whole-of-Government approach to peace. Finally, the UNAMA field offices could scale up their work at the local level by fostering social cohesion in preparation for a high-level peace process, building on the knowledge gained from ongoing peace initiatives. This will require the retention of a broad field presence (see sect. VIII. below), with improved integration of field-level staff into the priority activities of the Mission. In the medium term, UNAMA could focus on promoting mediation efforts if requested by the Government.

30. With regard to regional cooperation and dialogue, an Afghan peace process calls for greater international support and coherence than currently exists. To bring this about would suggest an increased role for the United Nations to support and promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation. It is recommended that UNAMA, in close cooperation with the Government, increase its support for regional dialogue and regional initiatives, as appropriate, in particular the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan and the Kabul process for peace and security cooperation. Consistent with the Government's priorities, this would entail renewed efforts, including greater collaboration with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, to promote regional coherence on counter-terrorism while maintaining an overall focus on building support for peace negotiations. The Mission would also rely more on its two liaison offices in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in Pakistan.

31. Apart from these established regional processes, UNAMA should endeavour to use its convening capacity to reconsolidate the regional consensus on Afghanistan. This process should go hand in hand with the increased focus of UNAMA on promoting peace. The Government's peace and reconciliation strategy should provide an opportunity for building trust between Afghanistan and its neighbours and create space for enhanced cooperation at the regional level.

32. In line with the demand for greater synergies and more effective use of United Nations resources, UNAMA should, as mentioned above, work more closely with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, located in Ashgabat. By virtue of its regional mandate, the Regional Centre is positioned to convene the five Central Asian countries, along with relevant regional organizations and other key stakeholders, to discuss and encourage a more coherent regional approach and to support an eventual peace process.

33. In support of the three strategic priorities outlined earlier, the Political Affairs Division of UNAMA may require specialized capacity in areas such as mediation, reconciliation, rule of law (constitution), civil society outreach, transitional justice issues and armed groups/security. Where relevant, the political pillar will draw on broader United Nations expertise with regard to, among other things, mediation, reconciliation, transitional justice, counter-terrorism and sanctions regimes. Additional support could be supplemented by the more proactive use of existing standby mechanisms, such as the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, and by drawing on the expertise of the wider United Nations system.

34. Underlying these functions is the need for a robust analytical capacity within the Mission. Conflict prevention, conflict management and the design and implementation of effective peace strategies all depend on an accurate and timely analysis of the evolving tensions and the main actors in the conflict, as well as an understanding of their positions and influencing factors. This includes a cross-cutting understanding of the political economy that has emerged around the conflict, which makes its resolution more difficult. In this context, I recommend that the integrated analytical capacity, with its cross-cutting approach, be incorporated into the political pillar.

35. Owing to the reduced international military presence and the change of its role to advising, training and assisting, I recommend the abolishment of the Military Advisory Unit. One post of Senior Military Adviser should be retained within the Political Affairs Division to liaise with international military forces, contribute to the integrated analysis of the Division and the Mission as a whole and provide strategic-level advice on military affairs to the Mission leadership. I also recommend that the Police Advisory Unit and the Rule of Law Unit be abolished. A smaller rule of law capacity should be located in the Political Affairs Division to advise on normative issues, including on justice and anti-corruption measures.

36. A suggestion raised by some senior Afghan officials and international interlocutors and contested by others in the course of the strategic review was the potential for a high-level United Nations regional envoy. I believe that the time and conditions are not currently assessed to be ripe for this initiative. Rising demands on my Special Representative in Kabul relating to internal politics and electoral developments could foreshadow such a division of labour at a later stage.

VI. United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan and the United Nations country team: implementing development for peace

37. The third strategic priority is critical to promoting and sustaining the political efforts calibrated to securing peace. It entails ensuring the coherence of support in alignment with the Government's priorities and promoting the development of the underpinning structures necessary for long-term socioeconomic development in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

38. The President of Afghanistan has expressed concern regarding the work of the United Nations agencies and the need for better alignment with Government priorities. That concern is shared among other Afghan interlocutors. They have also stressed the need to reduce what they view as high transaction costs, improve transparency, strengthen the focus on building national capacity and reduce the number of interlocutors for the Government. Other Government representatives, in particular those from line ministries with core agreements with agencies, have spoken highly of the work of different agencies. Furthermore, a number of international donors have pointed out that United Nations agencies remain an important and trusted vehicle for development cooperation. My recommendation is therefore that the Mission's functions to coordinate international development work and to promote increased coherence need to be more focused on effective delivery in alignment with the national priorities endorsed by donors at the conference held in Brussels in 2016, as described below.

39. The second pillar would be headed by a Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator who, in consultation with and under the direction of my Special Representative, is responsible for the work of the pillar and for leading and overseeing the United Nations country team. The incumbent would be responsible for ensuring United Nations delivery against the third strategic priority. In this regard, it is recommended that the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator has delegated responsibility to be the primary interlocutor and focal point with the Government and international donors on behalf of the country team and separately, in his or her capacity as Humanitarian Coordinator, the humanitarian community. The implementation of this recommendation, however, will depend on the commitment of the United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes, their governing boards and donors.

40. Instead of engaging in a limited number of programmatic activities, which included a now completed donor-funded project on women in community policing, the pillar would focus on strategic coordination. The main functions that need to be consolidated within the second pillar are the continued and strengthened ability to coordinate the international community's civilian efforts in Afghanistan, including the promotion of more coherent support for the Government's priorities, and the leadership of the United Nations country team, all while maintaining principled humanitarian action where people are in need. Both of these functions bear directly on the achievement of the third strategic priority and indirectly on the achievement of the first and second priorities.

41. Interlocutors of the strategic review team valued the role of UNAMA in coordinating international assistance, including strengthened donor coordination. With the enhancement of the responsibilities of the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, UNAMA should have the means by which to contribute more effectively in its role as the Co-Chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

42. With the aim of a focused approach for development to ensure maximum impact and coherence, United Nations development activities need to be aligned closely with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework while reflecting the global objectives of the United Nations, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2016, United Nations agencies spent $1.3 billion in Afghanistan, including both development and humanitarian funding. Over 90 per cent of the funding was in six thematic areas (agriculture, education, health, return and reintegration, rule of law, and the normative functions) carried out by various agencies. This differs somewhat, however, from the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which was formulated prior to the establishment of the current Government and is based on five pillars: equitable economic development, basic social services, social equity and human capital, justice and the rule of law, and accountable governance.

43. To ensure a system-wide response to national priorities, in line with my report on the repositioning of the United Nations development system (2017), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework is being revised in consultation with the Government with a view to it being endorsed by the Government. It is envisaged that each thematic area will have a lead agency to coordinate with others having clearly defined responsibilities and contributing in accordance with respective outcomes. Agencies should increasingly consider joint programmes as a preferred delivery option. Such an approach could significantly reduce parallel programme implementation mechanisms as a means to strengthen national capacities and reduce transaction costs. It could also help to ensure better synergy between development and humanitarian activities in Afghanistan while fully respecting humanitarian space and principles and the responsibilities of the Humanitarian Coordinator.

44. To strengthen strategic coordination, the possible merits of supporting donor coordination efforts with peacebuilding expertise could be further examined. Operating in close cooperation with the political pillar and the human rights component, such efforts could, among other things, include advice on and support for suitable peacebuilding approaches across United Nations programming at the national and subnational levels, with a particular focus on alignment, particularly in support of an eventual future peace agreement. Such a peacebuilding component could also enhance the Mission's capacity to support the Joint Monitoring and Coordination Board.

45. It is also recommended that the Governance Unit, with its presences in Kabul and field offices, be discontinued. The Government's efforts to promote effective and accountable subnational governance may benefit from normative advice from a small group of dedicated experts at UNAMA headquarters (second pillar). Even without dedicated field staff, these few experts would still be informed by the reporting from the Mission's field offices.

46. While the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the United Nations country team would be mutually accountable for performance and for a shared contribution to Afghanistan's priorities, respective United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes would remain responsible for the implementation of programme components and be accountable to their respective agency heads and to respective donors. Nonetheless, the country team will be expected to demonstrate to the Government how, as a whole, it has contributed to the economic and social progress of Afghanistan, including by being able to describe how funding has been spent on a sectoral and geographical basis.

47. It is recognized that the coordination of United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes is challenged by the fact that each of these entities has its own line of authority, budget and timeline. Furthermore, agencies rely on donor funding for

their activities and are often encouraged to react to donor priorities, which may not always be fully aligned with the priorities articulated in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework. In this regard, more cohesion between this pillar's constituent parts, in particular, robust donor coordination and the Resident Coordinator's team, could enable synergies (including donor mobilization) and alignment with national priorities. In this regard, I welcome the recent commitment of the President to periodically participate in meetings of the United Nations country team.

VII. Human rights: impartiality and credibility

48. The UNAMA Human Rights Unit represents the third pillar of the United Nations system. Its reporting in particular has been a major element of the Mission's overall credibility as an impartial actor in Afghanistan. Consistent and high-quality unbiased reporting and engagement with the parties to the conflict has helped to establish UNAMA as an impartial interlocutor. Dialogue with armed elements, notably the Taliban, on the protection of civilians has proven valuable, will remain important in the future and may provide entry points for a more substantive political negotiation. Humanitarian dialogue and negotiations on access for humanitarian actors will also continue to be important going forward. It is essential, therefore, that the Human Rights Unit continue to prioritize its monitoring, reporting and advocacy on the protection of civilians in armed conflict; the protection of children affected by armed conflict; the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and conflict-related sexual violence; and the prevention of torture. The Unit also has responsibilities to enhance the integration of human rights in United Nations country team/humanitarian country team programming, including compliance with the United Nations human rights due diligence policy.

49. At the same time, in line with the Government's priorities, UNAMA should expand its efforts to build the capacity of national institutions, in particular the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, and promote the institutionalization of human rights protection within the country's security entities. UNAMA should also strengthen its engagement with Afghan and other institutions to follow up on recommendations of its human rights reporting. This would not entail additional resources, but rather a recalibration within the Human Rights Unit.

50. I intend to move the post of Senior Gender Adviser from the Human Rights Unit to the Office of my Special Representative, consistent with Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) on women, peace and security as well as the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. This structure, which would bring UNAMA in line with special political missions worldwide, would enable the Senior Gender Adviser to more effectively provide strategic and political advice to the Mission's leaders and across units as they work to promote the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and political processes and improve the representation of women in governance structures. Mission-wide, there is a need to further build capacity on gender mainstreaming among staff so that the efforts of the Senior Gender Adviser are effectively supported by gender expertise embedded in all functional units.

VIII. Field presence of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

51. UNAMA currently has six regional offices (covering several provinces) and six provincial offices (covering certain provinces that are deemed to be of particular

strategic importance). The UNAMA field presence is one of the most visible manifestations of the Organization's lasting commitment to and engagement in supporting Afghans all over the country. The offices conduct outreach throughout the country, support mandate implementation and provide reporting to the Mission's headquarters. The strategic review team found that international donors and partners strongly supported the work of the offices, as did subnational stakeholders, while the President was more sceptical of their benefits, particularly the Mission's engagement in promoting subnational governance.

52. There are clear benefits to retaining a broad presence throughout the country, balanced with cost and security factors. With the general drawdown of the international presence having begun in 2014, local-level interlocutors, from governors to community members, have expressed on numerous occasions the profound hope that UNAMA stays; the United Nations presence is the last indication to many of the continuous international commitment to Afghanistan. This factor is particularly relevant in areas dominated by ethnic minorities, where the United Nations is often the only international organization present and is seen as a means of transmitting concerns to a central Government sometimes perceived as distant or indifferent. It is also relevant at this time, when the Government's own reach over the national territory is uneven and contested.

53. Local-level interlocutors also referred to the mediation support role that UNAMA plays in the field through its local peace initiatives, which simply cannot be implemented from afar. Moreover, UNAMA is able to direct the attention of local leaders to areas that they may otherwise overlook and is uniquely placed to act as a connector between local communities/authorities and the relevant ministries in Kabul. This is an important but invisible effort that has a real impact, even if it is difficult to quantify.

54. As areas are cleared of insurgents, or if access increases as the result of either a convincing peace process or local-level ceasefires, there will be a need to support a return to normality. UNAMA has an important role in making such an effort as effective as possible. This also cannot be done from far away, and addresses the need for greater co-location with United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes.

55. Taking into account outreach, cost and potential security implications, the strategic review team considered a number of scenarios, taking into account effectiveness, cost efficiencies and security considerations. On the basis of those criteria, I recommend that UNAMA close one provincial office (Farah Province); outreach to the province would, if conditions permit, be conducted from the regional office in Herat. In addition, United Nations Headquarters and the Mission will explore the feasibility of further nationalizing functions in the remaining five provincial offices without compromising the implementation of the mandate or the safety of staff. While the nationalization of provincial offices could potentially facilitate co-location with other United Nations system agencies, certain functions, such as political and human rights monitoring, as well as information and communications technology, may prove too sensitive. Lastly, it is recommended that the Mission assess the option of reducing international posts in the six regional offices over the coming years by forming smaller, multidisciplinary teams whose staff individually possess broad skill sets, with the exception of human rights staff, who need to maintain a distinct operational independence.

56. Should Member States express determination for an immediate, larger reduction of the UNAMA field presence, several observations and considerations apply. First, a significant reduction of offices would need to take place in phases, not least because of the administrative and logistical burden on the Mission, but

mainly because of the perception and related messaging required. The closure of several offices simultaneously would likely be interpreted as a reduction in the international community's commitment to Afghanistan. Due consideration should also be given to the political environment, particularly the upcoming 2018-2019 election cycle, in the timing of this decision. It would also be important to ensure that the remaining UNAMA presence covers all regions where the different ethnic communities in Afghanistan are represented for as long as security allows. Second, the decision to close offices is essentially irrevocable. Third, there would be a one-time cost for closing the offices, given contract termination and, as applicable, severance allowances, the need for transport of reusable assets and other costs. Expected cost savings from the closure of offices would likely not be immediate.

IX. Mission support and security

57. The provision of adequate security remains a precondition for the United Nations presence in Afghanistan. The security situation in Afghanistan remains difficult and poses corresponding operational challenges for the United Nations in delivering mandated tasks and activities. Most recently, several United Nations compounds in Kabul were damaged by the suicide truck bombing of 31 May 2017 that affected the international community. A number of embassies were forced to withdraw staff owing to extensive damage to their facilities. To date, UNAMA has not had to reduce its staffing numbers and continues to function as before. The evolving threat picture, however, will likely require further adjustments to the security posture of the United Nations, including the strengthening of facilities against the possibility of an acutely increased magnitude of explosives being employed by insurgents.

58. The security arrangements required to ensure the adequate delivery of mandated tasks and activities impose significant costs. In 2017, 24 per cent of the UNAMA budget was allocated to security-related costs. Therefore, opportunities to increase synergies, share costs and perform cost recovery, including with United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes, need to be further explored. Such opportunities include the use of joint services, such as guard forces, and the sharing of resources, including through greater co-location. Some synergies are already being achieved in the areas of security training, the operations centre, the Air Terminal Unit at Kabul airport and countrywide radio rooms. The establishment of joint medical services should also be envisaged as a priority to ensure uniform and more rationalized medical care for all United Nations staff.

59. UNAMA has initiated a number of cost-saving measures, including a reconfiguration of air assets and greater integration with the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service to avoid duplication; the streamlining of support services, including medical and ground transportation services; and improved cost recovery for services provided to United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes. Additional opportunities for co-location between UNAMA and the United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes need to be explored for financial and security reasons.

X. Conclusion

60. I welcomed the opportunity provided by the request of the Security Council for a strategic review of UNAMA. For more than 15 years, the effort to create a stable and prosperous Afghanistan has been a major goal of the international community, for which huge efforts and resources have been provided and in which

the United Nations has played a vital role. That role, however, has had to change over time as the context has evolved. As the strategic review suggests, the time has come again for a change in how the United Nations operates in Afghanistan.

61. Afghanistan is once again in a period of increasing insecurity and fragility. Beyond the immediate suffering being inflicted upon the Afghan people, the armed conflict is impeding efforts to bring the political and economic progress that will ultimately ensure stability. This situation cannot continue indefinitely; the Afghan people need a future to look forward to. Without a peace process, the sustainability and viability of all of our joint efforts to bring stability and prosperity to Afghanistan will be called into question.

62. I recommend that the findings of the strategic review as set out in the present report be incorporated into the next mandate of UNAMA. I would also like to express my gratitude to my Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, for leading the strategic review and to my Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA, Tadamichi Yamamoto, for his leadership of the Mission, as well as all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan for their support for and participation in the strategic review. I would also like to thank all of those interlocutors, especially Afghan counterparts, who generously provided their views on the role of UNAMA for the purposes of the review. My recommendations for the future focus and configuration of the Mission and related United Nations entities take into account the view expressed by many interlocutors of the important role of UNAMA in supporting the progress of Afghanistan towards peace, stability and prosperity, despite inevitable obstacles. Going forward, the strengthening of the strategic partnership between the Government and UNAMA, in particular, will be key to ensuring the effective implementation of the international community's support for lasting peace and development in Afghanistan.

United Nations S/2017/697

Security Council

Distr.: General
18 August 2017
English
Original: Arabic

Letter dated 10 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to write to you in response to the letter dated 25 July 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland addressed to the President of the Security Council concerning the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic. That letter and its annex were issued on 28 July 2017 as document S/2017/638. In that connection, allow me to convey to you the following facts and information:

- First, my Government is not surprised that the United Kingdom insists on spearheading such suspect political manoeuvers, whether in the context of the work of the United Nations and the Security Council or that of the International Syria Support Group. From the first months of the crisis in my country, the actions of the British Government and the Governments of a number of other States that signed the above-mentioned letter have been aimed at creating conditions conducive to a humanitarian crisis in Syria and then exploiting the resulting suffering to engage in purely political interference in my country's internal affairs that is unprecedented in the annals of international political relations. Non-interference in internal affairs is a core element of the concept of sovereignty and of the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Here, I am referring specifically to the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey.

- As for the British Government, its long history of colonial rule across the globe and in the Middle East attests to the fact that it has never sought, at any point in history, to promote stability and security in the world. Moreover, its policies have demonstrated the utmost disdain for the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter and helped to create some of the most dangerous hotspots in the world, including in Palestine, Cyprus, Kashmir, Northern Ireland and South Africa. In addition, it continues to occupy 10 of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, which remain under foreign rule, to this day. I need only mention the Balfour Declaration, which plundered the entire territory of the State of Palestine, dispersing and displacing millions of its citizens, depriving them of a stable and permanent refuge and homeland. It is therefore not at all surprising that Israel, the occupying Power, would name one of the main streets of occupied Jerusalem after Balfour.

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- Before entering into detail, I wish to draw the attention of the States Members of the United Nations to the fact that many of the Governments of the States whose representatives signed the annex to the letter (S/2017/638) have helped to compound the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people by imposing illegal unilateral coercive economic measures that directly affect various aspects of the lives of Syrian civilians, including access to food, water, health care and basic services related to the availability of electricity, heating, education, freedom of movement, travel and investment in the agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors. Furthermore, most of the Governments of the States that signed the above-mentioned letter have joined the illegitimate so-called international coalition led by the United States of America. To date, the air strikes carried out by that coalition in Syrian territory have killed and injured thousands of innocent civilians and destroyed dozens of power plants, water, oil and gas stations and installations, bridges, infrastructure, homes and public and private property. The coalition's actions have caused enormous economic losses, which are estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars, and adversely affected the humanitarian situation in the country.

We are talking about the Governments of States whose unlawful political and military actions have destroyed broad sectors of the Syrian economy and displaced millions of Syrians, placing many of them at risk of drowning or death at sea as they seek to secure the necessities of life and refuge. Therefore, those Governments that support terrorism in Syria or indulge the sponsors of terrorism and that have, to this day, thwarted efforts to arrive at a political solution to the Syrian crisis are not politically, morally or legally qualified to address topics related to the humanitarian situation or humanitarian work in the Syrian Arab Republic.

- In response to the baseless, specious allegations contained in the annex to the letter (S/2017/638), I call on all Member States to refer to the identical letters dated 24 July 2017 that I addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council on behalf of my Government (S/2017/635). Those letters set out the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the forty-first report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (S/2017/623). I also refer them to the statement that I delivered on behalf of my Government at the Security Council meeting held on 27 July 2017 (S/PV.8015), which was devoted to the monthly briefing on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic that is given by the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. I present to you the main points refuting the allegations made by the Governments of the States that signed the annex to the letter (S/2017/638):

- Most of the Governments of the States that signed the annex to the letter (S/2017/638) continue to exploit and distort the monthly reports of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic in order to pressure, coerce and vilify the Syrian Government. The main reason for this is that, to this day, more than three and a half years after the first report was published, the authors of the monthly reports continue to ignore the real obstacles to humanitarian access in Syria. The most significant of those obstacles are the following:

  (a) The Governments that signed the letter have failed to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly with regard to respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-interference in its internal affairs;

(b) The practices of armed terrorist groups, chief among them the so-called Nusrah Front and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and their affiliated gangs;

(c) The United States of America, the European Union and other States continue to impose unilateral economic sanctions on the Syrian people;

(d) The Governments of donor countries have reneged on their financial pledges. As a result, humanitarian response plans are only 21 per cent funded;

(e) The Governments of the States that signed the letter have failed to fulfil their obligations under Security Council resolution 2165 (2014), particularly with regard to monitoring the borders and mechanisms to control the passage of humanitarian assistance convoys through those borders. Consequently, up to the time of writing, the border crossings have been used to smuggle terrorists and weapons into Syria;

(f) The creation of a hostile military coalition, which includes many of the States that signed the annex to the letter of the representative of the United Kingdom (S/2017/638), that is destroying Syrian infrastructure and killing innocent civilians, and the establishment of military bases in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic without the authorization of its Government;

(g) Certain regional and international actors continue to interfere in Syrian affairs in a harmful manner, with a view to achieving their destructive agendas, prolonging the Syrian crisis and obstructing efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful political resolution through a Syrian-led political process, without foreign intervention.

- The noble humanitarian objectives that humanitarian operations are expected to achieve in Syria are fundamentally unattainable in the absence of a genuine, unpoliticized humanitarian partnership between the Syrian Government and the United Nations. However, the purpose of the monthly reports has been deliberately changed. Instead of focusing on the obstacles to humanitarian access in Syria in order to overcome them, the reports are being used by certain States that are permanent members of the Security Council and other actors to slander the Syrian Government and put pressure on it and its allies in their war against terrorism. They are also being used as a cover for efforts to channel humanitarian aid convoys to armed terrorist groups, instead of the Syrian civilians who rightfully deserve to benefit from them.

- The Syrian Government spares no effort to fulfil its responsibilities with respect to improving the living conditions of Syrian civilians in all areas, without discrimination. However, United Nations humanitarian affairs officials, particularly those with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), have chosen to take an adversarial position, thus undermining cooperation and trust, and to question the credibility of the Syrian Government as a humanitarian partner, the cooperation of which is essential for the implementation of the humanitarian response plans.

- As documented in official records, many officials of international and United Nations agencies working on the ground in Syria have distanced themselves from the monthly reports of the Secretary-General with respect to the work of their agencies. Indeed, they have confirmed that they had not given information to OCHA and that they reject the harmful and fragmented manner in which such information is presented in the monthly reports, because it does not reflect the reality of their coordination and cooperation with the Syrian

Government in relation to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Instead, those international and United Nations officials have said that some OCHA officials are attempting to turn them against the Syrian Government. They say that OCHA officials have told them that the Office does not need to coordinate with the Syrian Government in order to carry out its activities. Needless to say, such statements run counter to the obligations of OCHA towards the Syrian Government under Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). There is also no need to remind OCHA officials that those resolutions define the parameters of their role in Syria, a role that is limited to coordinating the distribution of humanitarian assistance. They must not usurp the mandate of United Nations and international organizations and agencies to distribute such assistance.

- The Syrian Government is keen to clarify the facts in relation to the implementation of the plan for the dispatch of humanitarian assistance convoys to unstable regions. My Government has sent many letters to the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the United Nations Office at Geneva in which it provides information and precise figures on the humanitarian convoys operated by national humanitarian partners. However, the authors of the report and the representatives of OCHA continue to tamper with those figures. Their actions are in line with an agenda that is aimed at putting pressure on my Government and intimidate it. For example, the authors of the forty-first report state that only two humanitarian convoys were dispatched to hard-to-reach areas since April 2017. However, according to facts and documented reports from humanitarian organizations and partners on the ground, 48 convoys have reached those areas since the beginning of 2017.

My Government will not allow itself to be caught up in the barefaced political game being played by some of the Governments whose representatives signed the annex to the letter (S/2017/638). It will continue to fulfil its constitutional duties to the citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic, whether by working and cooperating with all humanitarian partners to deliver humanitarian assistance to those who truly need it throughout Syria, or by combating the terrorism of ISIL, Al-Qaida and the Nusrah Front and associated individuals, groups and entities, or by striving with serious and credible international partners to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis through a Syrian-led process, without harmful interference or dangerous foreign directives that conflict with the genuine national interests of the Syrian Arab Republic and all its citizens.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is confident that the majority of Security Council members will not be swayed by the attempts of some of its permanent members to politicize humanitarian work in Syria. At the same time, it urges the Security Council to discharge its responsibility to maintain international peace and security and take the measures needed to ensure that:

1. All Member States commit to implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism, particularly the provisions relating to definitively ending the provision of funding, weapons and support for armed terrorist groups in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. All Member States commit to refraining from any practices or harmful interference aimed at distorting the noble aims of humanitarian work and exploiting it to hinder the intra-Syrian political process that is being facilitated by the United Nations and aimed at resolving the Syrian crisis in a manner that is decided by Syrian themselves, without outside interference.

3. A firm stance is taken against the coercive economic measures that are being unilaterally imposed on the Syrian people by the Governments of some Member States.

4. A clear legal position is taken vis-à-vis the acts of aggression committed by the illegitimate so-called international coalition led by the United States of America against the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic under the pretext of combating ISIL. The bombings, vandalism and destruction that are being committed by the coalition must come to an end, and the Governments of the participating States must be held politically, morally, legally and materially responsible for the acts of systematic destruction and murder perpetrated by their military forces operating within the framework of this illegitimate coalition over the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative